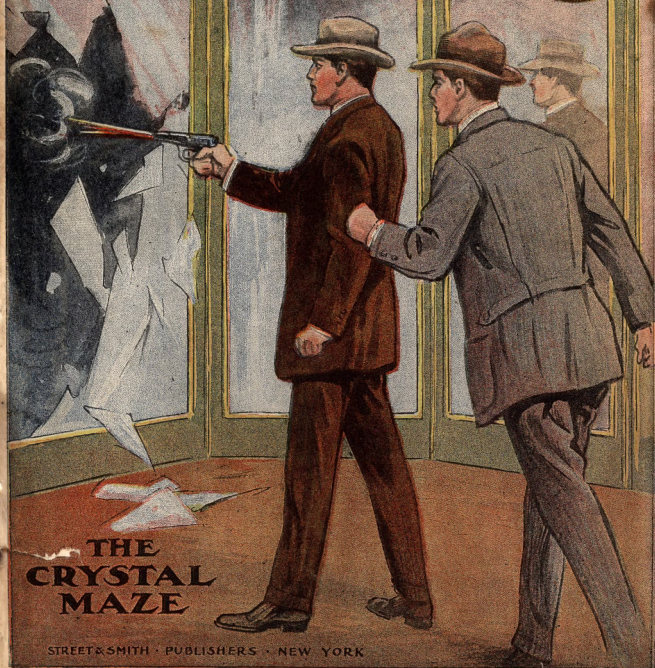


No. 100

AUG. 1911

5 CENTS

Nick Carter Stories



THE
CRYSTAL
MAZE

STREET & SMITH · PUBLISHERS · NEW YORK

NICK CARTER STORIES

Issued Weekly. Entered as Second-class Matter at the New York Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Ave., New York.
Copyright, 1914, by STREET & SMITH. O. G. Smith and G. C. Smith, Proprietors.

Terms to NICK CARTER STORIES Mail Subscribers.

(Postage Free.)

Single Copies or Back Numbers, 5c. Each.

3 months.....	65c.	One year	\$2.50
4 months.....	85c.	2 copies one year	4.00
6 months.....	\$1.25	1 copy two years.....	4.00

How to Send Money—By post-office or express money order, registered letter, bank check or draft, at our risk. At your own risk if sent by currency, coin, or postage stamps in ordinary letter.

Receipts—Receipt of your remittance is acknowledged by proper change of number on your label. If not correct you have not been properly credited, and should let us know at once.

No. 100.

NEW YORK, August 8, 1914.

Price Five Cents.

THE CRYSTAL MAZE;

Or, AN OCEAN ISLAND MYSTERY.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

STRANGELY MISSING.

"Isn't it about time you furnished a little information about our destination, Ida?" Nick Carter asked quizzically, the corners of his mouth twitching into a smile.

He was in one of his own big touring cars, with Danny Maloney, his chauffeur, at the wheel, and his companion in the roomy tonneau was Ida Jones, his clever and beautiful woman assistant.

Ida had insisted upon the great detective's company on a mysterious errand uptown that morning in late summer, and thus far she had not seen fit to reveal anything in regard to it.

Nick, however, had been willing enough to come along, for he knew that Ida was singularly level-headed, and not likely to waste his time.

"You have been very patient, chief," she replied, with a bright smile, "and your trust is quite the biggest compliment I have received in a long time. I shall now give you all the advance facts you will need, and when I have done so I'm sure you will say that I have done well to steal you away in this unceremonious fashion. For I want you to help me find a girl who, I'm afraid, has been stolen in a still more unceremonious way."

"Some one you know has been abducted, eh?"

"I have known her for a year or two, but you will have to judge for yourself as to whether it is an abduction, a kidnaping for ransom, or something else.

"Go on, Ida," Nick urged. "You know I shall do everything in my power that the case seems to demand. Have I ever heard of the girl?"

"Perhaps not, but you doubtless know of her father. She is Gertrude Rollins, the only daughter of Thomas F.

Rollins, the senior member of the big wholesale grocery firm of Rollins & Sidney."

"Thomas F. Rollins? I have often heard of him, of course. He's one of the richest and most respected men in wholesale circles in New York. He must be worth close to a million, at the very least. How old is the girl? Is she in society?"

"Yes; she was one of last year's 'buds,' and one of the sweetest and most attractive girls I have ever met. She is only about nineteen, but seems older because she has a fine mind and a mature sort of poise. She disappeared Monday night, and this is Thursday. Fortunately, however, they have been able to keep the facts out of the newspapers, largely through Mr. Rollins' influence. I heard of it only because I am a close friend of Gertrude's and went there in response to an invitation she had extended last week. They have not notified the police or set any other machinery at work because they have shrunk from the thought of that and the publicity it would probably bring, sooner or later. Mr. Rollins' lawyers are advising him, and that is all. I pleaded with them to let me tell you, however, and at last, with the consent of the lawyers, they have given me permission."

"I can understand their feeling," Nick remarked, with a sympathetic nod. "I would doubtless feel the same way if I had a grown daughter who disappeared. Tell me about the girl, and all the rest of it. Is she flighty, headstrong, romantic? Was she happy at home? Did she have any known love affairs?"

"She is not that kind of a girl, chief, in any particular. I know what you mean. There are lots of girls, even rich and more or less socially prominent ones, who would not greatly surprise any student of human nature if they were found missing some morning. But Gertrude Rollins is a healthy-minded girl, who has always had every wish

gratified, and has been absolutely devoted to her home and family. She has received a great deal of attention from men, but she is unusually frank, and I am sure she has never been particularly impressed by any one. Therefore, she is just about the last girl who would be expected to vanish in this fashion—at least, of her own accord, and with her own consent."

"I see. Your reading of her character ought to be unusually valuable, Ida, since you are a woman, and, in addition, an exceptionally keen observer. You think she is being detained against her will, therefore, or that something tragic has happened?"

"She would not, under any condition, have given her family such unspeakable pain if she had had anything to say about it, chief. Besides, there is direct evidence that she is being detained by force."

"Indeed? Have her captors communicated with the family?"

"Evidently, but in a peculiar way. They have asked for and obtained a ransom of twenty-five thousand dollars."

Nick whistled.

"Rollins fell for it, then?" he asked. "But if that is the case——"

"No, chief, it isn't all over by any means. Mr. Rollins decided, contrary to the advice of his lawyers, that twenty-five thousand was little enough to pay for Gertrude's return, and to escape the notoriety that was sure to follow if the search went on. He therefore complied with the demand, and he took the money in person to the place designated. This was last night, and he relied upon the anonymous promise that his daughter would return home at eight o'clock this morning if he paid over the money and did not try to catch those responsible. Instead, he received another note in the first mail this morning, saying that he had been even 'easier' than they had anticipated, thanking him sarcastically for the money, and intimating that he could whistle for it—and for Gertrude, too. You can imagine his state of mind after that, and the mother is nearly crazy."

"That was certainly rubbing it in," murmured the great detective. "At this moment I fail to recall any other instance of such flagrant double-dealing in such a connection. It would be interesting to know what the motive was. It looks, though, as if there had never been any intention of restoring the girl to her family—or else the temptation to eat their cake and have it, too, proved too strong to resist. But, whatever the explanation, the two letters which Rollins has received may prove to be valuable clues."

Ida looked extremely doubtful about this.

"They may be in your hands, chief," she admitted, "but I don't see how. I have seen them both, and they seem to me about as hopeless as anything well could be. They are both written on plain bond typewriter paper, C. C. C. brand, of which, as you know, there must be thousands of sheets sold every day in New York. And the envelopes are white stamped envelopes, with not even a printed return blank on them. They were postmarked at two different downtown substations, the busiest and most crowded in the city, and were, of course, merely dropped into a slot. The man who mailed them knew what he was doing, and I shall be very much surprised if you find that he has betrayed himself in any way."

"You seem to have gone into it pretty thoroughly, Ida,"

said Nick. "Probably you are right. It doesn't sound easy. Were they typewritten?"

"No; the addresses were 'printed' with a pen, and the letters themselves were in shorthand."

"In shorthand!" Nick exclaimed, in surprise.

"Exactly. You were not prepared for that, were you? It is true, nevertheless. The Pitman system was employed, and the characters are very carefully made, in ink. But I've never heard yet of a handwriting expert who even claimed to be able to identify the writer of a given lot of stenographic notes."

"And it will be some time before you do," remarked Nick. "I'm afraid you're right about the hopelessness of the letters as clues. You haven't told me yet, however, just under what circumstances Miss Rollins disappeared, and where she was seen last."

"So I haven't. Yet that is one of the most interesting phases of the case. She vanished Monday night at Ocean Island."

Again the detective gave a gesture of surprise.

"Ocean Island!" he echoed. "Isn't that a rather odd place for a girl such as you have described her to be? I should have thought that she and her family would not be likely to swell the numbers at any such popular pleasure resort as that."

"Oh, the most unlikely persons go there for a lark once in a while, chief," replied Ida. "You do yourself, for instance."

"But I don't pretend to be 'in society,' my dear girl."

"That doesn't make any difference. 'Society' people are very human, after all, and they like an excuse to unbend, as you, who know and are looked up to by droves of them, are perfectly well aware. Anyway, Gertrude went to Ocean Island that night with a party of young people, under the chaperonage of a certain Mrs. Byron West, a very sprightly, dashing young widow from California, who has made herself very popular in the eighteen months of her residence here. Mrs. West and the others in the party all agree in saying that Gertrude was first missed when they emerged from Legrand's Crystal Maze on Spray Avenue. I don't know that you remember the place. It is the biggest of three or four of those mirror-lined labyrinths at Ocean Island, in which you wander through all sorts of crooked, baffling passages, running into glasses at every turn and seeing yourself reflected in a dozen places at once."

"I know the kind, but I'm not sure I remember this one—unless it's the one next to the left of The Garden of Eden."

"That's the one."

"Well, I should say it is a good place to become lost in, but a poor place in which to stay hidden long. They searched for her, of course, and appealed to the management?"

"Certainly. They stayed there for two hours, and did not reach town again until two in the morning. All they found out—or seemed to find out—indicated that Gertrude had disappeared of her own free will. It seems that the Maze has a side exit—a little, mirror-covered door leading to a narrow passageway between it and the next attraction to the left. When the manager and employees searched the place, they found that door slightly ajar, and declared their belief that Gertrude had found the knob by accident and had slipped away impulsively, hiding her-

self in the crowd that is always surging along Spray Avenue. Here we are at the Rollins house, though, and I do hope you can put some heart into the poor father and mother!"

CHAPTER II.

IDA DISTRUSTS THE WIDOW WEST.

The wealthy wholesaler's residence was a narrow brownstone house in the Nineties, next door to Fifth Avenue.

Nick Carter and his fair assistant were admitted without parley, and Mr. and Mrs. Rollins soon entered the drawing-room, into which the two detectives had been ushered.

Rollins was a florid, kindly faced man in his late fifties, of about medium height, slender and wiry. His wife was evidently several years his junior, and was still beautiful in a plump way. The faces of both plainly showed the strain which they were undergoing, and that of Mrs. Rollins showed traces of recent tears.

Ida Jones introduced her chief, and the warm-hearted Nick quickly put the grieving pair at their ease, and made them understand that he could be trusted, not only in respect to his ability but his discretion as well.

They did not need much encouragement to tell their story in their own way, and Nick let them do so, hoping that some new point might be brought out.

They professed themselves as convinced that their daughter had been more than ordinarily contented with her home, and without any of those romantic tendencies which most frequently result in such disappearances. Moreover, they naturally held that the receipt of the anonymous demand for a ransom, together with the crushing blow administered by the second letter, were sufficient proof that Gertrude was not herself responsible. Finally they declared that they had already exhausted every possible source of inquiry known to them, having repeatedly questioned their daughter's friends in the city and telegraphed to those in other places, all without avail.

After Nick had questioned them for a while, he asked to see the letters which had been received. Rollins produced them at once, and passed them over. A hasty examination on Nick's part was enough to convince him that Ida had been right. The anonymous communications had been prepared too skillfully to offer any real hope that their author could be traced through them.

"I see," he remarked, "that this first letter names top of a mail box at the southeast corner of Fifth Avenue and Ninety-first Street as the place where you were to deposit the sum asked, which was to be done up in a package as if it were to be mailed. That's another clever device. Many persons persist in the hazardous custom of so disposing of mail matter that is too bulky or oddly shaped to go into an ordinary box. Therefore, your action would not attract attention. The hour appointed was probably one between the collection times at that box, and consequently there was no danger of a postman coming along and taking the money away before the schemer could claim it. As for its subsequent removal, that would have been as easy as your placing it there. The corner is a quiet one, and the man doubtless waited his chance, pretended to mail a letter or place another package on top of the box, and in doing so quietly removed your

twenty-five thousand.' All very simple and effective. It is exceedingly unfortunate, however, that you did not have the corner secretly watched, or its approaches searched. The fellow must have been where he could watch your movements all the time, and if you could have caught him——"

"I know, I know, Mr. Carter, but I did not dare!" the father replied vehemently. "The money was nothing to me if it could bring Gertrude back to us, no matter how. It never entered my head that they were merely playing with me, and would not keep the bargain. Even my lawyers did not once suggest that possibility, although they were violently opposed to my yielding. I wanted the suspense over with, and I would have been willing to pay much more, without any attempt to have the rascals punished, as they so richly deserve. Therefore, I simply could not think of doing anything that might influence them to go back on their word. Why, I did not look to the right or the left in approaching or leaving the box, because I was afraid they would think I was trying to spy on them. And not only that, the letter expressly stipulated that I should take the money alone. I couldn't have had anybody with me without violating their conditions, and I could not see how anybody could be secreted beforehand in sight of the place without the possibility that they would find it out and cease negotiations—perhaps revenge themselves upon Gertrude in some way. Last of all, even if we had caught the man who was lurking about, waiting for the money, that would not have given Gertrude back to us. There isn't any likelihood that the fellow would have revealed her whereabouts, and it might have been impossible to trace her through him."

"That's all true enough—too true—Mr. Rollins," the detective admitted, "and I do not blame you in the least. Your supreme interest was, of course, in getting your daughter back, and this first letter seemed to promise that."

He turned to Mrs. Rollins and questioned her about the different members of the party that night. It turned out that the girl's escort had been a young man of unimpeachable character, who had been a childhood playmate, and had been devoted to her in a more or less brotherly way ever since. He had been assisting in the search, and seemed almost as broken-hearted over the affair as the parents themselves. Apparently, there was no possible ground for suspicion in that connection.

As it happened, all of the other men in the party—except one young husband whose wife accompanied him—were escorting the girls to whom they were either engaged, or to whom they were unusually attentive. Furthermore, none of them had ever showed any particular interest in Gertrude Rollins.

That seemed to leave the chaperon, at whose suggestion the trip to the resort had been made, as the only one who was open to the least suspicion. And, even in her case, such a possibility seemed of the remotest kind. She was a comparative stranger in New York, to be sure, and nothing very definite was known about her California antecedents, but that alone proved nothing.

She had showed herself quite unconventional in some of her entertainments; and had displayed a tendency to lead her guests on in a rather free and undignified way, but nothing more. Mrs. Rollins had not cared to have Gertrude associate with her to any marked extent, but had

never seen any reason to set her foot down squarely and say that she should have nothing to do with her.

The most significant aspect of the matter was that Ida Jones had taken occasion to call upon the popular widow a day or two before, merely as a friend of the missing girl's, and had been unfavorably impressed. Nick gave considerable weight to that verdict, for the very good reason that he had seldom known his pretty assistant's judgment of persons, particularly of women, to be wrong. Nevertheless, even if Mrs. Byron West was not altogether to be trusted, it did not follow that she knew anything about the distressing occurrence that the others did not know.

Ida ended her brief account of her call thus:

"She declared that she had been very much worked up over the affair at first, and was so still, in so far as her feeling of responsibility for Gertrude's presence there that night was concerned, but she gave it as her private opinion that Gertrude had taken the opportunity to disappear of her own accord. 'Our little friend has probably eloped with some man,' was the way she expressed it; and then she had the audacity to add: 'You never can tell about these quiet girls—volcanoes sleep under snow, lots of times, remember, until they get ready to erupt!' I could have scratched her eyes out for that, the catty thing! It was not what she said, though, that affected me most disagreeably, but the woman herself. Many women in her position would doubtless take a similar attitude, for we aren't very charitable to each other on the whole; but I had the strangest feeling all the time that Mrs. West wasn't in any particular what she seemed to be. I know she's popular, and I can understand why. She has a very magnetic way with her, but nothing could make me believe that she isn't false to the core. She may not have had anything to do with Gertrude's disappearance—I'm not saying she did—but I'm convinced that she is capable of almost anything."

"Well, we'll keep her in mind," declared Nick. "Your intuitions may have led you aright for all we know at present, and I may decide to pay her a visit on my own account. However, the first thing seems to be a further trial at the Ocean Island end. I am loath to believe that those on duty at the Maze that night are as innocent as they claim to be. Miss Rollins may have left by that side door or she may not. If she did, it strikes me that she must have left under escort—to put it mildly. We have no reason to suppose that she was ever in the place before in her life. As I understand it, the trip to the Island was undertaken on the spur of the moment, at Mrs. West's suggestion, after her guests had been in her apartment for an hour or so. In that case the young lady would have had little time to plan such a disappearance, and even if she had—unless she were far more familiar with the Maze than is believable—she would hardly have hit upon that unused door so readily. No, no! If she left by that door, she probably left because she was compelled to; but we can't be certain that the door had anything to do with her disappearance. One of the men connected with the place may have opened that door a little, and then called attention to it simply to divert the search into other channels."

"You mean that you think some one employed there knows where poor Gertrude is?" Mrs. Rollins asked tremulously.

"Not necessarily—reasoning from that alone. That

trick might have been merely resorted to in an impulsive attempt to clear the management of any possible responsibility, and to prevent a scandal that would hurt business. It might have been innocent enough. However, I am not prepared to acquit any of them, in my own mind, without the most searching investigation—and I do not exclude Mrs. Byron West when I say that. Everything possible will be done as speedily as it can be managed, Mrs. Rollins. None of my other cases at present involves such anxiety as that under which you and Mr. Rollins are laboring, and they will have to wait. I shall let Ida do as much as she can properly handle, however, not only because she has the case well in hand already, but because it is one which a woman is peculiarly fitted to handle. If anything new comes up—even the slightest thing that might have a bearing—please let one of us know immediately. We shall take the same course in regard to you. Above all, keep up your courage. I shall hope to have news for you soon, and I trust it will be good news."

CHAPTER III.

SOME CLEWS ARE RUN DOWN.

About nine o'clock that night Nick Carter's car stopped on Spray Avenue, Ocean Island, some little distance from Legrand's Crystal Maze, and from it alighted the detective himself, Chick, his first assistant, and Ida Jones.

The detectives had not been idle during the hours since the interview with Mr. and Mrs. Rollins.

Nick had disguised himself with unusual care, and had called upon Mrs. West in the guise of a mythical uncle of Gertrude Rollins—having first taken care that the family would hear out his claims in case the lady should be doubtful of the relationship. He had found her at home, and had been admitted, after considerable delay.

The California widow did not impress him much more favorably than she had Ida Jones. She expressed the utmost sympathy for the anxious family—in which the detective felt instinctively that she was not sincere—but she did not attempt to conceal the fact that she was "sick and tired," as she put it, of being questioned about the affair.

And when Nick tried to draw her out further by telling her of the ransom that had been paid in vain, she triumphantly declared that that only bore out her theory, and that Gertrude's "friend" had taken the easiest way of getting money to start housekeeping on.

The detective was naturally unwilling to take that view of the matter, but he did not succeed in trapping the woman into making any damaging admissions, and was obliged to withhold final judgment in regard to her, for he realized that she might be of a naturally suspicious nature.

After he and Ida had left the Rollins house that morning, the latter had given Nick something new to think about. She had reminded him that Gertrude Rollins was the fifth young woman who had strangely disappeared at Ocean Island that summer. Nick had not been consulted in any of the other cases, but they had all been written up extensively in the papers. All of them had called forth a great deal of police activity, but in no instance had satisfactory results been obtained.

Two of the girls—none of whom was socially prominent—still remained unaccounted for. The body of one had been found washing back and forth on the beach

several weeks after her disappearance, and one had been found, after nearly two months, wandering the streets of Brooklyn. She had been recognized, and had been taken home in a dazed condition, but had never recovered sufficient clearness of mind to tell her story or to implicate any of her supposed captors.

Ida had pointed out the possibility that those who had been responsible for these abductions might also have been instrumental in that of Gertrude, and the detective had seen at once that there might be something in her suggestion. It was well worth looking into, at any rate.

Before doing so, however, Nick had contrived to see all of the others who had been in the party. He had called upon them, with the single exception of young Frank Lisenard, in the character of the supposed uncle. That had been impossible in the case of the young fellow who had been Gertrude's escort, for he knew the family too intimately to be deceived by such a ruse. As a result, he had received a visit from the detective in the latter's own proper person.

Nick was attracted to Lisenard at once, having found him a keen, frank, manly young chap, who was evidently genuinely concerned over his former playmate's disappearance. After the interview, there no longer remained the slightest possibility that he had borne any secret part in the affair.

He declared that Gertrude had seemed in her usual spirits all the evening, and that soon after they had entered the Maze she had laughingly run on ahead of him—they were already separated from the rest of the party—and invited him to find her if he could. He was sure that she had no motive for the act, other than a mere spirit of girlish mischief, called out by her novel surroundings.

He had followed as soon as he had given her a little "sporting advantage" in the way of a start, but had failed to find any trace of her. Just as he started he had thought he heard a slight scream or startled exclamation, but had not been sure and had never said anything about it. There were feminine exclamations of various sorts coming from all directions, some of them more or less hysterical, and it was hard to distinguish any one voice or to tell the exact nature of the emotion which produced the cry. The more he had thought about it, however, the more certain he had become that it must have been Gertrude who had uttered the exclamation.

The new point thus brought out was an interesting one, but apparently of no great importance, since there was abundant evidence of other sorts that the girl had been seized and borne away. And the interviews with the rest of the party did not even yield that much that was new.

Chick had also taken a hand in the investigation, and with a more striking result than was the case with either of the others.

He had been sent to the Island to make inquiries about the reputation of Legrand's Crystal Maze and those connected with it. He had found that there seemed to be quite a little mystery surrounding Jules Legrand, the proprietor, who was incidentally found to be the chief owner of The Garden of Eden, adjoining, and also of another amusement place next to that.

It appeared that little was known about the man, and that, although he frequently visited the Island, he left

the active management of his attractions to others. Chick had not succeeded in getting very far along that line, but the very fact that there was something secret about Jules Legrand might prove an opening wedge.

The young detective felt that he was making distinct progress, however, when he discovered, from the gossip of the Island, that at least two of the other girls who had disappeared there that summer had last been seen in or in the immediate vicinity of the Crystal Maze. And it was apparently the belief of many that the other two had vanished at the same point. He was told that the facts had been hushed up, however.

Here was, indeed, food for thought.

But Chick's final discovery that afternoon had dwarfed even that. He had learned that Legrand was on the Island, and presently the man was pointed out to him. He was a striking-looking man, handsome, and very foreign in appearance, with a rather pale skin, and a jaunty, carefully waxed mustache, jet black in hue.

The young detective had thought best not to enter the Maze itself that afternoon; therefore he had been about to leave the Island when he saw Legrand. An impulse seized him to follow the man and learn what he could about his haunts in the city. He had done so, and had been startled to find that Legrand's destination was none other than Mrs. Byron West's apartment. Nick's assistant had subsequently hung around for nearly two hours, but had not been able to see the proprietor of the Crystal Maze emerge.

It was principally because of that astounding piece of evidence connecting the lively widow from California directly with Jules Legrand, which had led to the visit of the three detectives to the Island that night.

Nick and Chick intended to play subordinate parts as long as possible, however. It had been decided that Ida should take the lead and enter the Maze alone, in the hope that she might meet with some adventure similar in its beginnings to that which had befallen Gertrude Rollins and the other girl victims of the place, or, at least, might pave the way for a like experience later on.

She was dressed very girlishly for the occasion, and was prepared to act the part of a rather clinging, unsuspicious young creature, not at all flirtatious, but suggesting that she was easily influenced, and perhaps a little too fond of pretty clothes and good times.

Gertrude had not been of that type, but the rest of the girls who had disappeared evidently had been more or less inclined that way. Other considerations had seemingly entered into the Rollins girl's seizure, but Ida had practiced a part that would ordinarily bring an unprotected girl a lot of undesirable attention, and she desired nothing better than to be seized and carried off. There did not seem to be much chance that her wish would be gratified, but if it was, it might prove the shortest route to a knowledge of Gertrude's whereabouts.

And the detective's woman assistant was well armed, and prepared to let things go just as far as she thought necessary, but not a step farther—or so she believed, at any rate.

Nick and Chick were not so sure about that, and had been reluctant to let her run the risks involved, but had finally yielded to her pleadings. Therefore, it was with more or less uneasiness that, from a little distance, they saw her buy her ticket for a trip through Legrand's Crystal Maze.

CHAPTER IV.

ANXIETY LEADS TO ACTION.

Nick Carter and his assistant strolled about in the immediate neighborhood of the Crystal Maze for a full hour, but Ida Jones did not reappear.

At the end of that time they drew aside a little out of the crowd which thronged Spray Avenue, and held a consultation.

It was obvious that Ida had met with some unusual adventure, otherwise she would long ago have emerged from the garishly lighted building, which, if reports were to be believed, had seemingly swallowed up so many girls in the last two or three months.

But it was equally clear that she did not wish help yet, and was determined to see the thing through unaided and in her own way, as long as she could. For it had been carefully arranged that she should blow a police whistle if she needed immediate assistance. She had worn the whistle inside of her waist, suspended on a long silver chain, as if it were a locket.

She had also carried a dainty parasol, inside of which had been placed a quantity of white powder. A small hole had been made in the silk cover of the closed parasol, close to the place where the cover joined the rod. This hole had been fixed so that it would not allow the powder to sift out until Ida was ready to have it, but when she was she could easily open the hole, thus leaving an inconspicuous but plain enough trail behind her, which her friends could follow, if necessary.

In addition to these precautions, she had been instructed, in case she found herself in a particularly tight place, or in some secret nook which Nick and Chick would have difficulty in locating, to fire her automatic, if possible, and thus help them to reach her with the least delay practicable.

They had heard neither whistle nor shot, and consequently it was reasonable to suppose that the self-reliant Ida, wherever she was, still believed herself capable of handling the situation single-handed. She had evidently been far more successful in baiting her hook, or, at any rate, in finding something of decided interest about the Maze, than any of them had really thought likely. Nevertheless, Nick and Chick were by no means elated over the situation or the prospects.

They were quite willing to admit that Ida's plan had promised the quickest results, and seemed to have achieved them, or to be in a fair way to do so; but they did not like the idea of her being in there alone, armed and resourceful though she was.

Moreover, they could not be sure that she was still in the Crystal Maze building at all. For all they knew, she might, indeed, have been carried out of the side door which had been pointed out to Gertrude's friends, and might now be at some more or less distant point, from which she could not communicate with them, even if she were in the greatest danger.

They had tried to keep an eye on the door in question, but had not been able to do so all of the time, since they did not wish to attract attention by loitering in one place too long.

Therefore, their uncertainty and anxiety grew until they decided that Chick—who was carefully disguised, as was Nick himself, for that matter—should buy admission to the Maze and see if he could tell by Ida's powder trail,

if she had left any, whither she had been taken. Nick, meanwhile, was to keep himself in reserve, so that his make-up would not become familiar to the employees of the place.

Chick presently entered the Maze, in accordance with this arrangement. He was gone perhaps fifteen minutes, which dragged by tediously to Nick. At length he reappeared and strolled idly along Spray Avenue. The detective had been on the lookout for him, and followed. He overtook his assistant in front of The Garden of Eden.

"What did you find?" he asked guardedly, ranging alongside.

"Ida's found all she was looking for, by this time, I imagine," Chick replied soberly. "She left a trail, all right. It ends smack against one of the mirrors in a narrow corridor, seemingly somewhere in the middle of the Maze. There's no sign of a door or a knob. The panel of glass looks just like all the rest."

"The trail doesn't lead to the side door, then?"

"Nowhere near it."

"Could you identify that mirror without the trail of powder? They may notice that at any moment, you know, and sweep it up."

"I thought of that, and I guarded against it. I happened to be wearing this little diamond scarfpin. I watched my chance, and scratched a little cross on the glass with it."

"That's good! Well, Ida has her wish, but if she would only hurry up and call for reinforcements, I'd be a lot better satisfied."

"Same here, chief! I wish we hadn't given her her own way, but we can't help that now, and she would never forgive us if we horned in now and spoiled any of her plans. What can we do?"

"Nothing, I'm afraid, except to stick around and wait for her to start something. I hope she won't wait too long. She must have been taken to some secret room. All those bewildering twists and turns of the mirror-lined passages offer unequalled opportunities for concealment, since they leave room for corresponding nooks and passages behind the mirrors. I can't imagine any more promising place for mysterious disappearances than this Maze, and it looks now as if the rumors in regard to it have plenty of foundation. There's one comfort, the partitions which carry the mirrors are probably very thin. I should not be surprised to find that they consist largely of the big sheets of quicksilvered glass, set in frames. If that is the case, however, I wonder that they dare to carry on this sort of business behind them, for, unless they drug the girls at once, it would seem that their struggles would be heard by the people who are continually streaming through the public corridors."

"By George! I hadn't thought of it in just that way before," muttered Chick. "Suppose they doped Ida right off the reel. If they did, no wonder we haven't heard a peep from her in all this time! This is getting confoundedly serious, chief! Don't you think we ought to follow her up without waiting any longer? They may have disarmed her and taken her whistle away from her an hour ago, and here we have been loafing around as if we had all the time there is! Ida is only a woman, after all, and if she found herself in a position in which her quick wit couldn't do her any good, what could she

do against a hulking brute of a man—or maybe two or three of them?"

"Don't get excited, my boy," cautioned the great detective. "That won't help matters in the least. Ida knows her business, and has proved, time and again, that she can extricate herself from the mighty trying situations without the help of the rest of us. Don't forget, too, that she's a jujutsu expert, and has muscles under those pretty arms that many a man might well envy. Armed as she was, and with her eyes open, I don't believe it would be possible for any one to drug or tie her before she had summoned help in some way—unless she let them because she saw a way to snatch victory from defeat later on."

"Maybe you're right. I certainly hope so, but this is about as little fun as anything could be. It's after ten now; what if we don't get any call from her by eleven or twelve, when the place shuts up?"

"Then I'm afraid I shall be inconsistent enough to break in and take a hand myself," replied Nick.

The minutes dragged by until half past eleven came, and still no change had occurred, and nothing had been heard or seen of the missing Ida Jones.

The crowds had thinned out greatly by that time, and it had become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, for the two detectives to remain anywhere near the Crystal Maze without arousing the suspicions of those in charge.

Moreover, it suddenly came to them that if they waited until the lights were put out in the place they might find it very difficult to find their way about or to identify the mirror which Chick had marked.

Therefore, they finally decided to enter the building and put their fears to the test.

Chick hurriedly sought a dark spot, close to the street, and made a few slight but effective changes in his appearance, in the hope that the attendants would not recognize him as having been in the Maze once before that night. When that was done, he rejoined his chief, and the two lost no time in buying their tickets and entering. They were told that the doors closed promptly at twelve, so that they had twenty-five minutes or so, at least.

Nick was not greatly surprised to find that the powder trail had vanished. It had probably been discovered and swept up as a matter of routine cleanliness, not because of any clear idea of how it had come there.

Nevertheless, Chick managed to find the scratched mirror after ten minutes of hunting. There was no time to look for a secret spring, for they might be interrupted at any moment.

Instead, Nick deliberately pulled out one of his automatics and shot the mirror to pieces, revealing, as he had anticipated, a gaping space behind.

The fat was certainly in the fire now, and whatever they did must be done openly, with all the swiftness and boldness of which they were capable.

CHAPTER V.

CHICK HOLDS THE FORT.

The gloomy, yawning hole which appeared behind the broken mirror was plainly shallow, being not more than three or four feet in depth. At the back of it was another partition, showing the silvered back of another great mirror.

Nick Carter kicked out the lower part of the shat-

tered glass and sprang through the jagged opening, smoking revolver in hand.

"Step inside and guard the opening here if you can for a while, Chick," he whispered swiftly. "They'll be here on the run from the entrance in a moment. I'll see if I can find Ida. Come if I whistle."

"Right!" answered his assistant, following him through the opening and then turning to cover his chief's operations as best he could.

Of course, the flimsy glass partitions could be broken through in a similar fashion at any point, and Chick could be surprised in the rear, and in the meanwhile he meant to do his utmost to keep the employees of the Maze occupied, and give Nick time for the necessary explorations.

The level between the partitions was two and a half or three feet lower than the floor of the passage, so that the detectives had been obliged to jump down, and had found themselves on the beach itself. The structure had been built close to the ground. Consequently Chick was now standing on yielding sand, covered here and there with dead, trodden beach grass. To right and left, the inner space or passageway in which he was lurking in wait, was crossed at the floor level by heavy beams, which, as he noted at once, were making Nick's progress very difficult.

Chick had no opportunity to take further stock of his surroundings because a uniformed attendant came running along the glass-walled corridor at that juncture, caught sight of the broken glass, and gave a loud shout, which was instantly answered, two or three other voices at least being distinguishable.

Almost immediately two other uniformed employees appeared, and with them came the man who had been taking tickets in the little cage at the entrance. The others seemed to wait for him, as if he had more authority than they, but Chick, who could see his reflection in one of the mirrors, did not believe that he was Legrand's manager. He looked too young for that. Besides, it was probable that either the proprietor or the manager had been personally concerned in Ida's disappearance. Perhaps both of them had, in fact, and if that were true, it was likely that they were with her now.

The ticket seller started toward the shattered mirror, with others behind him. Chick waited until he was within half a dozen feet, then thrust his head around the edge of the opening and showed his weapon.

"That's far enough, fellows," he said, with menacing quietness. "It wouldn't be good for your health to come any nearer."

The four men started back at this apparition, for Chick had taken care that his face should not be reflected in the mirror opposite.

"Here, what are you doing there?" the ticket man demanded gruffly, as soon as he had recovered a little from his momentary start. "Come out of that!"

As he spoke he whipped out a revolver, and the uniformed men did likewise, although they had backed away considerably farther than he had, and did not look as if they relished the thought of a gun fight.

Chick sank down on his knees, so that only part of his head was above the level of the floor. In that position he presented the smallest possible target. He covered the foremost man with his automatic.

"If there's any shooting to be done, I think I'll have

considerably the best of it," he called out deliberately, with the idea of delaying matters as long as he could. "Hadm't you better drop those pogguns and take a sneak?"

"Oh, you can't bluff us that way, bo!" replied the ticket taker. "We've sent for the police, and you'll get yorners in about half a shake."

Chick was certain that the young fellow was lying. The police might hear of the shots and make an investigation, but the consciences of those connected with the Crystal Maze were not clear enough to make them anxious to call the officers in if they could help it.

"I don't believe you, but I wish to Heaven you would send for the 'bolls,'" the young detective returned pleasantly. "Nothing would give me greater pleasure. They happen to be friends of mine, you see. I'm Chick Carter, the detective, if you care to know it, and I'm here on business. It really wouldn't be wise to shoot me or interfere with me in any other way, for unpleasant things usually happen to those who do at such times. Do you get me?"

The young fellow forced a mirthless laugh.

"That's a good one!" he exclaimed sarcastically. "Chick Carter, boys! Take a good look at him, boys, for maybe you'll never have th' chance again! Some joker, all right!"

Chick's heart suddenly began to feel like lead.

"What in thunder does this mean?" he asked himself apprehensively. "These fellows must know that two of us came in and yet they don't seem to be particularly worried, except for fear that I may turn loose with this automatic. They're stalling as much as I am, in spite of the fact that they can't help being on to it that the chief is searching the place. That looks decidedly as if they have nothing to fear, and I'm beginning to think they haven't. This place, inside here, is not what I pictured at all, and I don't see how it could offer much opportunity for concealment. Anyway, the chief doesn't seem to be doing much."

The last thought was called forth by the sounds of Nick's ineffectual scrambling over sand and timbers, which had been going on here, there, and everywhere, ever since Chick had taken his stand at the opening.

Half a minute later, while the ticket seller was lading out some more gibes and threats about the coming of the police, Nick quietly approached his assistant from behind.

"Don't turn your head," he cautioned. "I've found Ida's parasol, but that's all. When she dropped that, or had it wrenched away from her, all chance of her leaving any farther trail naturally ceased. I can't find any hiding place here. You can see around the whole place by stooping down under the level of the flooring. There's a sort of cellar door at the back, though. She may have been taken out through that. I don't see anything else to it, but I'm going to slip up that way while you hold the fort here, and bring the police."

Chick reached his free hand behind him and touched Nick's arm to indicate that he understood. Carter slipped away at once, and his assistant devoted himself wholeheartedly to distracting the attention of their armed enemies and preventing them from making any move to head Nick off.

"You'll find out this is no joke," he told them. "I am one of Nick Carter's assistants, as you'll soon find out, and I really must ask you once more to deposit those guns on the floor and make yourselves a little scarcer. The

corridor is too crowded to suit me. Well, what's the answer? I seldom extend such invitations more than once, and never three times."

The men in uniform at least seemed inclined to obey, but before they could do so, a fifth man, also in uniform, joined them. He was a negro, and plainly out of breath.

"I done got de boss," he whispered loudly behind one big hand—so loudly that Chick had no difficulty in hearing him. "He be on de job in a jiffy."

Then he caught sight of one of Chick's eyes just at the level of the floor, behind the motionless little barrel of the young detective's automatic. That was too much for the darky. He rolled his eyes, his jaw dropped ludicrously, and he beat an unceremonious retreat.

"Lordy!" they heard him mutter as he went. "This ain't no place fo' dis coon!"

"He am comin' aroun'—you knows how!" he added, over his shoulder, when he had reached a safe distance.

Chick heard that information, too, and he quickly guessed its import. "De boss" must be either Legrand or his manager, and he had evidently realized the situation, and was about to enter by the little door at the rear, under the floor, with the idea of preventing a retreat on the part of the intruders.

Chick's first thought was of his chief. If the man took Nick by surprise at the rear entrance, the latter might find himself at a great disadvantage, aside from his resulting inability to go for the police.

"Look out, chief!" the young detective yelled. "Somebody's coming in that way, I'm afraid!"

At that, the ticket seller was at last stirred to something like action. He curtly ordered one of the other men away, probably to reinforce the "boss," while with two remaining employees he sought refuge around one of the many corners of the Maze, keeping Chick's opening covered all the time, however.

Even as he was doing so, a couple of shots rang out from the rear of the building, quickly followed by a third.

Nick and "de boss" were clearly exchanging leaden greetings.

CHAPTER VI.

"EDEN" FALLS UNDER SUSPICION.

Chick could tell that the shots were not in the building itself; consequently Nick must have succeeded in getting out of the little door before he had been intercepted.

"So far, so good!" mused the young detective, keeping watch over the movements of his own immediate antagonists. "The chief isn't cornered, anyway. But that fellow, whoever he is, must have his nerve with him to open fire like that! He must know those shots will bring the police on the double-quick."

His train of thought was interrupted at that point, for, without warning, the ticket man opened fire on him. The fellow had taken courage, and was following his employer's example.

Fortunately Chick was not hit, but the bullet struck one of the ragged bits of glass still remaining in the frame, and drove several small fragments into the young detective's cheeks.

He ducked instantly, and several more shots passed

through the opening above his head, and one, poorly aimed, broke the next panel of glass.

Watching his chance, Chick returned fire. Most of the advantage was his, so far, for he could knock to pieces the glass partition, behind which his enemies had taken shelter, whereas practically all of his body was hidden by the elevated flooring, which served as a sort of breast-work. However, if any of the others should crawl under the floors and pepper away at his legs, the place would soon be too hot for him.

But Chick did not let that worry him. He set to work to do what damage he could, and speedily wrecked the corner behind which his opponents had taken refuge. They were obliged to retreat precipitately, whereupon Chick decided that they were sufficiently impressed for the moment, and that it might be well to go to Nick's assistance.

He accordingly deserted the post he had held for some minutes, and, swinging himself to the nearest piece of timber, began jumping from one to another of the cross-pieces. It was ticklish work in the faint light which shone into the place through the broken mirror, but it was quicker than to crawl underneath the timbers on his hands and knees.

Before he had gone more than halfway toward the back of the building, however, he was obliged to jump down and continue by the slower method, for the three men at whom he had been shooting had run to the opening, and were leaning through and firing at him in the obscurity.

Luckily, none of the shots took effect, but they made Chick's progress somewhat exciting and hazardous. As soon as he got down on the ground he saw the opening made by the little door of which Nick had spoken. The door was standing ajar, doubtless just as Nick had left it, and Chick did not believe that any further interchange of shots had taken place outside, unless they had been drowned by the firing within.

Had his warning come in time? Was Nick safe, or had the newcomer obtained the advantage before the detective realized that there was any obstacle to his exit in that direction?

Nick's assistant reached the little door safely, and crouched just inside for a moment to listen, being careful not to silhouette himself against the faint light of the opening, for that would have given those behind him too good a target.

His heart stopped for a second as he heard a low groan from the beach behind the Maze, then his instinctive fear vanished as he recognized Nick's familiar voice mingling with others some distance farther off.

Unhesitatingly the young detective sprang through the low doorway and glanced rapidly about him.

A large man was lying on the sand, within a dozen feet of him, and tossing about as if in great pain.

"It must be the manager," thought Chick. For the form was not that of Jules Legrand, as Chick had seen him that afternoon.

As he halted and looked about him, Chick saw his chief and three policemen approaching from the direction of the narrow passage to one side of the Maze building. One of the officers was in the gray uniform of a special.

"Hello, Chick! So you're all right, eh, after all that fusillade I heard? Thank Heaven! Here is the man," he went on, turning back to his companions. He came at

me around the corner here, just as I was crawling out of that little door, and I was obliged to reply to his shots. I hope I haven't wounded him very seriously. I fired at his legs."

"Better arrest those fellows inside before they can clear out," Chick put in hurriedly.

"That's so!" exclaimed Nick. "One of you men guard this opening and another cover the side door on the passage. We just passed it. The third man had better come with Chick and me, and enter at the front."

They were in time, after all, to round all of the employees up—with the exception of the man who had been sent to help the manager, and the darky. Those who had been firing at Chick had just decided that it was time to vanish, but were given no opportunity. The man who had been sent around the building by the ticket seller had heard the shots that had passed between Nick and the manager, and had bolted, without making any further investigation. The negro had also put as great a distance as he could between himself and the scene of hostilities. Both of them were found and locked up before the night was over, however.

As soon as the first lot, those inside the building, had been captured, a patrol wagon drove up and spilled out ten or a dozen reserves from the Ocean Island police station. Nick made himself and his assistant known to the lieutenant in charge, and, after a cordon of blue-coats was thrown around the building, the three drew aside to confer.

The detective did not bring Gertrude Rollins' name into it, but explained that they had been attracted to Legrand's Crystal Maze while investigating the disappearance of a young lady who had not been reported to the police as missing. He then described the way in which his own feminine assistant, Ida Jones, had vanished three hours before, and how they had traced her to a certain mirror inside and had found her parasol on the ground underneath the building. The parasol was found, and brought in proof of his statement.

Lanterns were brought, and the whole space behind and underneath the many twisting partitions of the Maze were gone over again with the utmost care. Nor the slightest evidence was found, however, that any one had ever been secreted there for any length of time, or had even been bound or drugged there preparatory to removal to some other place.

The mystery grew more and more baffling every moment, and Nick and Chick bitterly repented their action in yielding assent to Ida's unfortunate plan. Instead of bringing them any nearer to a solution of the other puzzles which centered about the Crystal Maze, the result seemed to have been that the daring Ida had gone the way of the rest.

She might still extricate herself from her difficulties, of course, and return none the worse for her trying experience, but the detectives had little hope of that now. They had counted on being able to help her, but as it had turned out, they did not have an inkling of her whereabouts. She appeared to be hopelessly lost to them, whether she were near by or miles away.

The only crumb of comfort they could find was the condition of the manager, whose name, it seemed, was Roger Pettus. There was nothing to show that the proprietor had been at the Maze, or its vicinity, that night. Consequently, the detectives were inclined to reason that

it was Pettus who had carried Ida off. If so, he was no longer able to trouble her, being wounded and under arrest. Under the circumstances, therefore, she might be insufficiently guarded now, and if she had not been heavily drugged, or too securely bound, she might yet succeed in winning her freedom.

On the other hand, Nick and Chick had no means of knowing how many had been involved in the abduction or kidnapping. Underlings might be guarding the girl detective at that moment, or she might be somewhere in the clutches of Jules Legrand himself.

Chick opened the way for the next move by telling his chief and the police lieutenant of the colored man's words. They indicated that the treasurer, or ticket seller, had sent the dinky to some point in the neighborhood to bring Pettus. If that were the case, as seemed fairly certain, Ida's present whereabouts might be determined by tracing the movements of the negro and the manager.

But the former had not yet been caught, and there was little or no chance that Pettus would give them any information.

They tried to extract some, nevertheless, but failed completely, as they had anticipated. Pettus insisted that one of his employees had come for him—where he had been he refused to say—and had told him that a gang of rowdies was shooting up the Maze and threatening the lives of the attendants. He had run to the place, prepared to protect it to the best of his ability, and had been just in time to see some one emerging from the little door at the rear. Then he had opened fire, without stopping to parley. He professed to know nothing about Ida Jones or the parasol which Nick had found.

In spite of the man's obstinate denials, though, the cross-examination, incidentally, brought ample confirmation of the detectives' suspicion that Pettus had been personally concerned in Ida's seizure.

As they were questioning him, Nick's eyes fell upon a white smudge on the sleeve of his coat. A nearer inspection showed clearly that the spot was caused by a deposit of the very same powder which had been concealed in the girl detective's parasol. Since Pettus had not been under the building or anywhere near the parasol since his capture, that circumstance furnished the best sort of evidence that the manager had been directly instrumental in its owner's disappearance.

The powder had doubtless spilled out on his coat sleeve during the scuffle. In fact, he had probably seized the parasol and flung it aside, in order to get it out of the way.

Progress was certainly being made, but it was altogether too slow for Nick and Chick. They decided not to waste any more time questioning those directly connected with the Maze. Instead, they seized the opportunity to approach the employees and managers of some of the neighboring attractions, which were fast closing up for the night.

In this way they quickly learned that Pettus had been in The Garden of Eden, next door, when he was summoned. The information came from several independent sources, and there was no reason for doubting its accuracy.

Was Ida Jones confined in The Garden of Eden, another of Legrand's enterprises? It looked as if she might have been at some time that night, at least, and preparations were hastily made for a raid.

CHAPTER VII.

A SUBTERRANEAN WHISTLE.

Even while the police lieutenant was issuing orders for the forcible entry and search of the adjoining amusement place, however, the two detectives found themselves wondering how Ida could have been removed to The Garden of Eden. That she had been seized and dragged under the Maze was apparent enough. The powder trail and the presence of the discarded parasol were proof of that.

But after that? Had she been taken through the little rear door? That was the only means of exit from the waste space that had been found during repeated searches of the most painstaking sort. And yet it would not have been easy to carry her away by that route, for the door opened right on the beach, not more than a hundred feet from high-water mark, and the sands had been crowded up to eleven o'clock, at least.

Even then, at half past twelve, there were many persons crowding about who had been stretched out on the beach behind the Crystal Maze and The Garden of Eden. They doubtless meant to remain there all night, for it was very hot in New York, and on such occasions thousands of people often sleep on the sands at Ocean Island for the sake of the cool sea breezes.

Nick and his assistant questioned some of these persons and found several who claimed to have been close behind one or the other of the suspected places most of the evening. No one, however, had seen anything suspicious going on before the first shots had been fired. They declared that they had seen no passing back and forth between the two places at all, and certainly nothing to indicate that a girl was being spirited away against her will.

Their positive testimony put a damper on the detectives' hopes of finding Ida with any degree of ease, but the search must be made, all the same. Ida had been removed from the Maze, seemingly, by Pettus, himself, and she must have been taken somewhere. A couple of hours, or thereabouts, after her disappearance the manager had been summoned from The Garden of Eden. That place must, therefore, be gone over with a fine-tooth comb before anything else was done.

While Nick and Chick were thus occupied, the lieutenant had stationed guards at all the exits of the Garden, which had already been closed up. Most of the thousands of lights were out, and probably all of the employees who did not sleep on the premises were gone. That was unfortunate, but it could not be helped. The police assured Nick, though, that there would be quite a number of attendants left to question, it being the custom to keep part of the force always on hand, as a precaution against fire; and to guard the place generally.

The Garden of Eden bore no resemblance to the Crystal Maze next door. It was an amusement park, one of the largest and best known at the popular resort. It covered several acres, and was surrounded by a high, thick wall of stucco, designed in imitation of the massive city walls of the Middle Ages, with watch towers, huge gatehouses, embrasures, battlements, and so on.

Inside of this picturesque wall rose a great ornamental tower, lighted at night by countless incandescent bulbs, making it one of the most imposing sights of the Island. Clustered about this tower were numerous buildings of various sorts, together with gardens, an artificial grove,

a miniature waterfall, a little lake, grottoes, and the like.

Thus, owing to the extensive and varied character of the place, its search presented many difficulties.

The officers who had been stationed at the different exits remained at their posts, while the rest, numbering about ten, inclusive of the detectives, went to the main entrance and demanded admittance.

By that time a crowd of several hundred belated pleasure seekers and employees of the various places of amusement had gathered about. To them the affair was a welcome diversion, a free show, of which they had unexpectedly become witnesses.

A small door beside the great gates was grudgingly opened, after a little delay, and the invaders poured in. Lieutenant Bentley ordered all of the lights in the park turned on, and presently most of the big inclosure was almost as brightly illuminated as in the daytime.

The night force was then brought together, and its members closely questioned. They were evidently well coached, and loyal to those who hired them, however, for they could not be induced in any way to admit that anything out of the way had been going on there, that night, or earlier. They admitted that Pettus had been there when the disturbance broke out next door, but claimed that he had been in the office, talking with the manager of the Garden, who had since gone home, at his usual time—twelve o'clock.

That story did not seem capable of holding water, at least so far as the departure of the other manager was concerned. In view of the excitement next door, and the fact that the Crystal Maze was under the same ownership as the Garden, it was hardly credible that the active head of the latter would have left the Island until things quieted down. Yet he was certainly nowhere to be seen. Perhaps he had taken Pettus' place as Ida's jailer.

The possibility was not an agreeable one to the detectives, but it served to spur them on to greater speed and thoroughness in ransacking the Garden.

The squad of police first scattered over the grounds and poked into every nook and cranny without result. After that the buildings were subjected to the same process, one after another. Even the tower was searched from top to bottom.

Up to that time nothing whatever of a suspicious nature had been discovered. In a room in the basement of the big tower, however, they came upon evidences of recent feminine occupancy. There were a number of cots in the room, and lying in one corner, under one of the cots, was a woman's silk petticoat.

Nick saw it first, and pounced upon it eagerly.

"What is this doing here?" he demanded of the man who was in charge of the Garden for the night, and who had accompanied them on their rounds.

The fellow looked at the skirt in a peculiar way for a few moments, then his face lighted up.

"Oh, I know how that must have come here!" he said, at last. "We sometimes use this place as a sleeping room for some of the men, as you see by the cots here; but now and then it's used as a dressing room for some of the performers we hire from time to time for our free open-air performances. A woman tight-rope walker had it for a week a little while ago, and she must have left that thing behind. I don't believe the room has been occupied since, and we don't pretend to take very

good care of it down here, seeing that we only ring it in when we're overcrowded."

The explanation was plausible enough, but it did not satisfy Nick Carter. If he read the signs aright, the man was lying, and had trumped up the excuse on the spur of the moment. Besides, the place they were in was admirably adapted to the demands of a hiding place.

As we have said, it was in the basement, so to speak, of the great tower. In other words, it was one of four rooms roughly partitioned off in the space inclosed by the foundation walls. For a floor it had nothing but the sand of the beach, and instead of windows there was only a couple of round openings, covered with opaque glass, close to the ceiling. It might as well not have existed, therefore, so far as the general public were concerned.

There were apparently only two ways of reaching or leaving this partitioned space, of some forty feet square in all. One was by a trapdoor in the floor above, which opened on a short, steep flight of cellar stairs. The other was by a door in the rear wall of the tower itself, which was separated by only half a dozen feet from a similar opening in the back wall of the Garden, leading to the beach.

It was easy enough, of course, to understand how Ida—and the other girls before her—could have been carried from the rear door of the Crystal Maze to the rear door in the wall of the Garden, and so into the tower; but that implied that the thing had been done under the very eyes of hundreds of people on the beach. It was theoretically possible if cleverly managed, but it did not seem that the risk would have been run. However, no other possible explanation had presented itself thus far.

Despite the yarn they had just heard, the detectives felt morally certain that several girls had lately been detained in that obscure room. If so, why not Ida? But where was she now, and where were Gertrude Robbins and the rest of those whom the Maze was supposed to have swallowed up?

Certainly no one would have dared to remove them, or any one of them, by way of the open beach, after the hue and cry had been raised, and it seemed equally certain that they were not in the park or the Maze. What sort of hide and seek was this that was being played at the detective's expense?

Suddenly Nick Carter struck his open left palm with one doubled fist.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "I've just thought of something! We've got to try some excavating!"

"Excavating!" echoed his assistant. "What do you mean by that?"

"Why couldn't I have thought of it before?" the detective went on, unheeding. "Don't you see that the floor here and under the Maze are the same—the sand of the beach itself? And can't you understand how easy it would be to run a boarded-up tunnel from the Maze to this tower, and to conceal the trapdoors at either end, whenever necessary, by pawing sand over them?"

Chick whistled.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "I shouldn't wonder if you had hit the nail on the head. Sand would lend itself to that sort of thing better than almost anything else, for it could be shoveled around in such a way as

to leave no suspicious traces. Let's see if we can bring out any hollow sounds here."

But Nick was already striding about the room and stamping his feet heavily. Chick looked quickly at the fellow who had so ingeniously explained the presence of the petticoat, and noted a fleeting expression of alarm on his face.

"Ah, just as I thought!" Nick cried, a few moments later. "Listen to this!"

He stamped several times on a certain spot, and, curiously enough, the sand gave out an odd, hollow sound. The detective and Chick immediately dropped to their knees and began digging in the loose sand with their hands.

But they had scooped up only a few handfuls when a peculiar, muffled sound, that was none of their doing, came up to them from beneath.

"What's that? A police whistle, as sure as guns!" cried the lieutenant.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GIRL DETECTIVE IS TRAPPED.

When Ida Jones sauntered self-reliantly into Legrand's Crystal Maze that evening, her heart was beating faster than usual under her thin, girlish dress; but no one would have known it from her manner.

She carried herself to perfection, and she made a picture that was certain to attract all the attention she desired—and perhaps more, too. There was nothing bold about her, for that would never have done, at all. Her difficult part required that she should not only be beautiful—which was easy—but that she should give the impression that she was ignorant and unaccustomed to knocking about alone, and yet, at the same time, that she was quite alone and determined to enjoy herself, in spite of that circumstance.

She smiled demurely at the ticket seller, seemingly unconscious of the fact that he was staring at her more than his duties required.

Having secured her ticket, she tripped in daintily, looking all about with the air of one who had never seen such a wonderful place before.

She passed a heavily built man who was lounging just inside the entrance, and gave him a veiled, slightly confused look. As she passed in she felt certain that it was the ticket seller's voice she heard saying, in a hoarse whisper: "Look at that peach, Mr. Pettus! Why wouldn't she do?"

Almost any other girl would have been frightened half to death, but Ida Jones was made of different stuff. The words she had caught were welcome to her ears, for they held out the hope that she was to have the adventure she so longed for, as a means of finding her missing friend, and, if possible, the rest of the unfortunate girls who had vanished from Ocean Island that summer.

Ordinarily, she would not have been willing to put herself in such a position, and Nick had never asked her to assume such risks as this. Now, however, she had done so of her own free will, spurred on by her knowledge of what Gertrude's parents were suffering, and she believed that she was quite capable of handling almost any situation that might develop. Besides, were not her chief and Chick within call? Surely, nothing very ter-

rrible could happen to her, armed as she was, and with them so near at hand.

Buoyed up by this thought, she wandered leisurely through the maze of mirror-walled passages, her eyes big with assumed wonder, her red lips a little parted.

About five minutes after her entrance, she drew back, with a little cry of surprise that was quite genuine. The big mirror which she had been passing had suddenly swung inward, revealing a dark hole behind the wall—a hole which seemed to have no floor.

The big man whom she had passed in the entrance was crouching in the opening. He thrust his head out, took a quick look in either direction, and then, leaning out, caught Ida in his arms and whisked a small chamomise-skin sack over her head.

She gave a muffled cry, and resisted, of course. That was a part of her performance, but, as a matter of fact, her resistance was partly real. She had not known what to expect, but she certainly had not counted upon being drugged at once. That experience had no place in her program.

It was too late now to retreat. In spite of her furious struggles she was drawn into the secret opening and heard the panel swing to and click into place behind her.

She managed to hold her breath so as to retain consciousness as long as possible, and meanwhile she tried desperately to do something that would bring her friends to her rescue. She had left the little powder trail so they would know where to look for the hidden door. Now, if she could only whistle for them or manage to fire her automatic!

She could not use the whistle with her head covered up in that fashion, however. As for her pistol, it was in a tiny holster strapped about her right leg, just below the knee. No breath would be necessary to fire it if she could reach it.

But all her efforts were in vain.

The big man held her too cruelly fast. Before she knew it he had forced her to her knees, and was dragging her along on the yielding sand. She threw her head back, and it struck sharply against something hard just above—one of the floor timbers which Nick and Chick were later to find so much in the way. The pain of the unexpected blow caused her to gasp, and her lungs filled with the fumes of the drug with which the bag had been charged.

She went limp, and knew no more for a time—how long she could not have told if her life had depended upon it.

When she recovered consciousness she found herself, bound and gagged, lying face downward on a canvas cot. Her ankles were fast and her wrists were tied behind her back. When she opened her eyes, her gaze encountered a partition of matched boards behind the cot, not more than six inches away.

Awkwardly she managed to turn her face so that she could survey her surroundings. She was in a good-sized room, perhaps twenty feet square. Two of the walls were of rough, thick concrete, while the other two were board partitions. In the former were several little circular windows, like portholes, set high up and consisting of ground glass, which admitted only a subdued light and gave no view.

Ida could see many shadows passing across them continually, however, and could hear the shuffling of multitudes of feet, the sound of happy voices, and strains of music.

Aside from herself, the room was untenanted, and it was bare, too, except for some other cots, which stood about on the sand floor.

It came to Ida in a flash that she was no longer in the Crystal Maze, and that she could not know whether she were near or far from her friends. She was, of course, not in a position to place the building in the depths of which she was confined, nor could she guess how, or by what route, she had been brought there.

In short, she was completely bewildered, and as near to sheer terror as she had ever been in her life. To be sure, people seemed to be all about her basement prison, but that was one of the most maddening aspects of her situation. She was alone and helpless in the very midst of a crowd. Those hurrying, heedless throngs of merry-makers might as well have been a hundred miles away for all the good they could do her, situated as she was.

Ida had not anticipated anything like this. She had counted on being the master of any situation that might come about, and now, at the very outset, she found herself the victim. Nothing had turned out as she had hoped, and there did not appear to be any good reason for expecting a change of luck.

She could still feel the weight of her little automatic against her leg, and the police whistle was pressing uncomfortably into the flesh of her bosom as she lay upon it. Therefore, she had the satisfaction, such as it was, of knowing that she was still armed. But what service could these things render to her in her present plight?

Wait! Perhaps she could get at her pistol, in spite of her bonds! At least it was worth trying. Anything would be better than lying there like a log and letting her active imagination picture all sorts of impending fates.

If she could only draw her automatic, train it on one of those little round windows, and open fire. That ought to bring help of some kind quickly enough.

But no! That was out of the question. In the first place, her bound wrists would hardly enable her to aim the weapon, even if she could reach it, which was very doubtful. And, besides, if she shot through the window the chances were that she might wound, perhaps kill, some one—a woman or a child, perhaps. She was not willing to run that terrible risk, even to save herself.

But if she could manage to fire several shots in any direction—into the sand, for instance—they would surely be heard outside and ought to lead to an investigation.

She determined to make the effort without further loss of time.

She hitched along on the cot until her feet were off the edge, then she sat up uncertainly, finding it extremely difficult to get her balance, owing to the awkward position of her arms. With her feet in the sand, she pushed the cot back by degrees until it was against the partition. That gave her something solid to lean against. Then she curled her legs up on the cot to the right, bringing her bound ankles as close to her side as she could without the use of her hands to pull them closer.

That done, she began twisting her body about to the left, reaching around to the right from behind as far as she could and straining her utmost to grasp the handle of her weapon. At first it seemed impossible to do so, but by degrees her groping fingers crept nearer and nearer and her supple body twisted ever farther.

At last she touched the cool steel, and, with a last convulsive jerk of her tortured frame, succeeded in getting a firm hold on the butt.

Joy and relief surged through her from head to foot. She was not quite at the mercy of her captors, after all! She had once more demonstrated her ability, woman though she was, to find a way out of overwhelming difficulties by her own unaided efforts!

She was just in the act of drawing the pistol from its miniature holster, when she heard sounds, which indicated that a trapdoor was being opened close by, followed by steps descending a flight of creaking stairs.

Ida's heart stopped beating for a few seconds, and her tense fingers froze to the handle of her automatic. Somebody—the man who had seized her, probably, judging by the weight on those complaining stairs—was coming, was almost in the room! There was no time to use the pistol now, and if he saw it he would take it away from her. Her fears did not even permit her to push the weapon back all the way into its holster. Indeed, she would hardly have had time to do so, for she had only jerked her skirts over it and partially relaxed her strained muscles when the man entered the room.

It was the man she had cause to remember—the manager of the Maze. A cruel smile overspread his face as he saw her sitting up.

"Well, little one!" he said, coming toward her. "So you thought you'd come back from the Land of Dope, did you? That's right, but what are you squatting like that for—all twisted up? You remind me of the song Jefferson de Angelis or one of those other comic-opera chaps used to sing about the circus girl.

"Come out of that position, and be comfortable," he went on, unceremoniously seizing Ida's ankles and pulling them over the edge of the cot.

The sudden motion dislodged the insecure automatic and it slipped from under her skirts and fell on the sand at the manager's feet.

CHAPTER IX.

IDA GETS A NEW JAILER.

Pettus looked at the little weapon in dumb amazement for a moment, then stooped and picked it up.

"For the love of Mike!" he exclaimed, looking from it to Ida. "Where did you get this, girl? Anybody would think from this that you're one of those skirts who tote the gangsters' guns for them nowadays so their gentlemen friends won't get pinched for carrying concealed weapons. You certainly don't look like it, though. I hope I haven't made any mistake in you, my beauty," he added, half to himself. "If I have, the main guy surely will jump down my collar with both feet!"

Ida, naturally, could not reply on account of the gag in her mouth. She had no desire to, anyway, for it was better that her captor should think of her in the light of a gunman's girl than that he should get an inkling of her true character. Moreover, she was thinking swiftly.

The manager's last words had been seized upon eagerly. They seemed to imply that he had not carried her off on his own account, but in the interests of some one else, the "main guy," as he had called him. The reference must be to Jules Legrand, who was evidently not at the Island that night. If that were the case, she would

probably be left alone, for the most part, until she could be turned over to the proprietor, and if the latter did not come to the resort later that night—and it seemed unlikely that he would—she ought to have a good many hours of grace before her.

The prospect gave her new courage; she hailed it as a condemned man hails a reprieve. In a twinkling she had lost most of her fear of this man: If he were under orders, he would be careful to respect those orders, if nothing else, for fear of getting into trouble with the man who paid him. She reasoned, therefore, that she was fairly safe for the time being.

And then, too, much might happen in a few hours. She knew, at least, that she was still on the Island. The catchy music and the crowds proved that. Furthermore, she was beginning to suspect that she might be in one of the buildings in The Garden of Eden inclosure. That seemed the most reasonable supposition, in view of Chick's discovery that Legrand also controlled the Garden. If so, her friends could not be far off, and might be looking for her at that very moment. Surely they would find her before long, if they had to tear down every one of Legrand's buildings to do it.

These reflections worked the greatest possible change in Ida's spirits, but she contrived to conceal the fact, and to act the part of frightened helplessness, while inwardly she was already speculating on the possibility of yet learning some of the things she had taken so many risks to ascertain.

As yet she had neither heard nor seen anything to give her a clue to the ultimate fate of Gertrude Rollins and the other girls who were missing. To be sure, they had doubtless been seized in the same way she had, and had probably been brought to that room. How they had been brought she could not say, any more than she could have told how she had been transported from the Maze; but the cots in the place suggested former occupancy of a similar kind.

Where were they now, though?

Ida had counted on retaining her senses, if seized, and being able to tell the route used and the location of the place to which she might be taken. She had also imagined that she would probably be taken directly to the retreat chosen for her predecessors, and would find them, or some of them, there. Then, when she had learned all that was necessary, she had pictured herself as summoning the chief and Chick.

The reality had proved very different, but, now that her worst fears for herself were temporarily in the background, she began to hope that Fate would be kind enough to her not to permit all of her dreams and plans to fall short of realization.

She realized that it would have to be some action on the part of her captor, not any effort of her own; but she clung to the possibility, nevertheless.

Pettus slipped the weapon into his pocket, looked her over speculatively, as if wondering if she could possibly have any more such things concealed about her, and then reluctantly started for the door. He turned back, however, and again approached her. Ida shrank back fearfully, although she no longer felt any particular apprehension.

"Hanged if I know what this gun means, kid!" he said. "I never would have expected to find such a thing on you. I had you booked as 'Innocence Abroad.' It don't

matter much, though. You look good to me, and I guess you'll look good to—others. Anyway, here you are, and here you're going to stay. Just make up your mind to that, and don't try any tricks. They won't do you a bit of good, and they may bring what you won't like. See the point, girlie?"

Ida bowed her head and burst out crying. She did it very realistically, too, and was still doing it when she was startled into silence by the sound of muffled shots.

Pettus, who had just opened his mouth with the apparent intention of ordering the girl detective to stop her noise, became transfixed, and listened intently. They heard no more shots for a while, but those which had reached their ears elated Ida Jones. There might be some other explanation, of course, but she rightly concluded that Nick and Chick had got to work.

As for the manager, he was plainly worried. He knew better than the girl did that the reports had come from the direction of the Maze. Presently, without another word, he hurried out of the room and up the stairs.

A little later he returned, in company with another man. Ida heard them talking while they were still on the stairs.

"I don't know what's up next door," Pettus was saying excitedly, "but I don't like the looks of things. I'll have to take a hand, and I want you to stay with this girl until I get back. She's already sprung one surprise on me"—he lowered his voice at that point, but Ida could still clearly distinguish his words—"and I'm afraid she may have some more up her sleeve. I'm sorry to saddle you with this thing, but I simply can't help it. Here she is!"

The two men were in the doorway now, and Ida could see that the newcomer was somewhat older and slighter than the manager of the Maze. He was immaculately dressed, smooth-faced, and looked something like an actor.

"I'll have to run now," Pettus went on, "This may be a raid. If it is, and they should turn their attention to the Garden—afterward, don't let them catch you napping! Take the girl down into the subway at the first sign of trouble, and stay there until somebody tells you it's safe to come up again."

"All right—but it can't be that, Roger! You're seeing things, that's all. If you should happen to be right, though, what about the little dears up above?"

"Oh, they're all right where they are," was the hurried answer, as Pettus bolted for the stairs. "They couldn't be found in a hundred years."

And after that the trapdoor fell into place behind him. Ida had seen at a glance that her new jailer was more to be feared than Pettus, and that his loyalty to his employer was likely to wear rather thin in spots. She suspected that he was older than he had seemed at first, and her opinion was confirmed when he removed his hat with a flourish of mock deference. His head was quite bald on top and what hair he had was turning gray. Ida took heart.

"This is too bad, child!" he exclaimed hypocritically. "You wouldn't be here if I had had anything to do with it, and I'd let you go now if I dared, but that would mean the loss of my own position. Been crying your pretty eyes out? Come, come, this won't do!"

He put his hand on her shoulder and got a nip from her pretty teeth for his pains.

"Ouch! You little devil!" he cried, starting back in pained surprise. "That's a nice way to treat your friends, isn't it?"

His pose of injured innocence was broken into, however, by a hurricane of shots from the direction of the Crystal Maze. He stiffened where he stood, still nursing his injured hand.

"By Jove, this certainly does look serious!" he muttered to himself. "It must be a raid, and Pettus is putting up a fight."

He listened anxiously for half a minute, then scuttled out and upstairs. Ida was sure that he would be back shortly, but she lost no time before seeing what sort of progress she could make toward freedom in case she were not interfered with.

CHAPTER X:

ALL'S FAIR IN WAR.

She got cautiously to her feet, balanced herself as well as she could, and experimented to see if the cords around her ankles gave her feet any place. They were too tight for that. Consequently she was obliged to hop if she expected to make any headway at all.

She kept her feet for a yard or two, then lost her balance and toppled over. Her presence of mind did not desert her, and she succeeded in throwing her body around so that she fell on her side, instead of on her face.

It was practically out of the question to get up again without first crawling to one of the couches. She was thus occupied when her new jailer returned, mopping his face.

"Ah, you thought you'd try to give me the slip, eh?" he sneered. "Well, you didn't, and now you're going where you're not likely to have the chance."

His false benevolence had fallen from him, revealing his innate cruelty and unscrupulousness. He strode up to the girl on the sand, whipped out a clean handkerchief and blindfolded her.

"That's to keep you from seeing too much, miss," he announced.

Next he dragged her into another room, and left her. She could hear him at work and muttering under his breath. Soon he returned and jerked her along by one arm. Ida felt fairly certain that he was taking her back to the room in which she had originally been, but she could not be sure.

Her feet were lowered into an opening, and she was made to sit on the edge of it for a few moments until the man had jumped down past her. That done, he reached up, grasped her by the waist, and ordered her to jump.

Ida shook her head and remained immovable.

Her captor cursed her for her obstinacy, and finally, after much tugging and grunting, got her substantial one hundred and thirty-five pounds into the "subway," as Pettus had referred to it.

He left her there, scrambled out of the hole, and again mounted the stairs. In a few moments he returned with another man, whom he cautioned to "make a good job of filling in the grave."

"Oh, you'll be buried good an' proper, sir!" was the answer, accompanied by a chuckle.

The bald-headed man thereupon entered the opening, which was at once closed behind him. Ida was listening

to the subdued scraping sounds which came from above when she felt her captor's arm stealing about her neck.

"You ought to know by this time that you haven't anything to fear from—" the man began, but the girl did not give him time to finish.

The bandage was still over her eyes, but his voice enabled her to judge pretty accurately as to the position of his face. She ducked her head without warning and rammed the top of it forcibly against his chin.

His remarks came to an abrupt conclusion, and she guessed, from the way he was spluttering, that she had made him bite his tongue. At any rate, he seemed to lose all inclination to lavish that sort of "sympathy" upon her.

When the man swung Ida down into the secret passage he left her leaning against one of the walls, and there she had remained. She could feel the wall with her bound hands, and knew that it was formed of rough, heaving planks. She edged her way along slowly in the hope that she could find a projecting nail head, against which she might chafe her bonds until the strands gave way.

She found no such nail, but she did encounter a small, sharp-edged knot, which seemed firmly fixed and protruded half an inch or so. Perhaps that would do if nothing else offered itself. She was about to continue her stealthy explorations, however, when she was startled by her companion's voice.

"Here, what are you up to now?" he demanded harshly. "Trying to scratch your back? Don't do it, whatever it is—makes me nervous!"

Ida was obliged to desist, but she stayed with her back to the little knot, and began cautiously rubbing her hands over the edge of it. It was soon apparent to her, though, that the process would be an almost endless one.

What should she do? Her mind was set upon getting her hands free somehow. If the chief and Chick had come out victorious in the fight, as they could generally be counted upon to do under most circumstances, they were probably looking high and low for her now.

It was the simplest of deductions to assume that the underground passage ran from under the Maze to one of the buildings just beyond the Garden wall on that side. It could not be very long, and the sand over the trapdoors at either end could hardly be much more than a foot thick, if as much as that. Ida did not know whether any sound she could possibly make would be heard aboveground, but she longed to try. She realized how easy it would be to shovel dry sand over the closed entrances in such a way as to defy detection, and she felt that she must do something to guide the detectives in their hunt, if it was a possible thing.

But the only means she could think of was to fool her captor into loosening her hands. Could she do that by hook or crook? She decided that she could try, at least. He could do no more than refuse.

She could not appeal to him in speech. It would have to be dumb show. She accordingly made a sound in her throat to attract his attention, turned around so that he could see her hands, and then held them out to him, repeating the gesture several times.

"Humph! Want me to untie your hands, do you?" he asked, at length.

Ida nodded her head vigorously.

"What for? So you can scratch my eyes out?"

This time she shook her head just as decidedly, trying

her best to make him think that she had changed her attitude. She knew it was a dangerous experiment, but that could not be helped now. If she could get her hands loose on almost any pretext, or in return for almost any promise, she would be in a much better position to defend herself, aside from the possibility that she might direct her rescuers.

She was not surprised at the next question.

"Will you promise to behave yourself if I do?"

There was a pause, after which Ida nodded her head ever so slightly. Just then, however, her quick ear detected faint sounds overhead. Muffled, crunching sounds they were, as if a number of persons were walking on sand, and accompanying them were other blurred noises, which suggested photograph records being played at a great distance.

The girl detective tried to keep her attitude as limp and dejected as it had been all along during her silent pleadings, but her heart bounded. Her instinct told her that the room above was being searched.

Evidently her jailer's hearing was not as good as hers, however, for he gave no sign that he was aware of what was going on over his head. If he had been, he would hardly have released Ida, even to that slight extent.

As it was, he chuckled expectantly as he cut the cords about her wrists. The girl felt them drop away.

But Ida's free hands had sped to her neck and grasped the little chain which held the police whistle. Before the grinning captor realized what she was about, she had jerked the whistle from her bosom, torn the loosened handkerchief gag from her mouth, and blown the shrillest blast she could command.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TOWER YIELDS UP ITS SECRET.

When he heard that peculiar subterranean whistle, the situation became as clear as day to Nick Carter.

He sent Chick posthaste through the back door of the tower, with instructions to see that the policemen who had been left on guard about the Maze did not allow Ida's captor or captors to escape from that end of the underground passage.

After that precaution had been taken, the sand was attacked with a will by all hands. The trapdoor was uncovered in a couple of minutes, the ring in it laid hold of, and the opening revealed.

Nick was the first one to jump down into the tunnel. All was dark, except for the light which found its way in from above. The detective quickly produced his electric flash lamp and lighted it. It was a dangerous proceeding, but Nick was in a reckless mood.

He gave an exclamation of alarm as he saw a woman's body stretched out on the floor of the passage, not far from his feet. A second glance showed the clothing to be Ida's.

He ran to his girl assistant's side, stooped, and raised her body in his arms. One hand sought her heart, and his withheld breath was expelled in a sigh of relief as he felt it beating strongly. An ugly bruise on her white forehead, just between her eyes, told the story.

She had been brutally struck down after blowing the police whistle, and had been rendered unconscious.

The police had, in the meantime, dodged past the kneeling detective and run along the passage. They found

it empty, and open at the other end, but when they clambered through the trapdoor under the Crystal Maze, they had the satisfaction of seeing Ida's keeper in the hands of Chick and the others. He had tried to escape and had blundered into the arms of those who were waiting for him.

Under the influence of Nick's restoratives, Ida soon recovered consciousness. Secure in the knowledge that she was once more safe and in the hands of friends, she quickly threw off the nightmare effects of her experience and was able to repeat, word for word, what she had overheard passing between Pettus and the manager of the Garden, Dawson.

The hints they had incautiously dropped seemed to point to the likelihood that other girls—probably including Gertrude Rollins—were confined somewhere in the tower. Dawson's reference to "the little dears up above" could have had no other meaning, it appeared.

Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that Nick thought the tower had already been searched thoroughly, a new and even more minute quest was begun.

Evidently the hitherto undiscovered retreat was of no ordinary character, otherwise Pettus would not have had any justification for his boast that it couldn't be found in a hundred years. Bearing that in mind, Nick, Chick, and Ida began at the basement and worked upward slowly at the head of a number of policemen.

The tower was brilliantly lighted from top to bottom. There was an elevator shaft in the middle of it, around which ran a squarely built instead of a circular stairway. The arrangement, in fact, was the same as that in the Washington Monument at the national capital.

Both the elevator and the stairway began at the ground floor, the trapdoor leading down to the basement being found to be under the first short flight of steps. There was obviously no place for a secret room on the ground floor, because everything was open to the outer walls of the tower itself. The stairs were built against the walls, and just inside of the stairs, as they continued around the four massive walls of concrete, was the elevator shaft.

The same arrangement held good until the very top of the tower was reached. Therefore, the searchers felt absolutely certain that no hidden nook had escaped them thus far. If they were right, the secret must await them at the summit of the climb. Extraordinary means must have been resorted to, however, to have had it escape the detective's keen eyes on their first tour of investigation.

But in the light of their new suspicions, they looked at the arrangement of the place with new eyes. There were no windows at all on the level at which the elevator and stairs stopped. Instead, there were four doors, one on each side of the tower, opening out on a narrow railed platform, from which visitors could get a splendid view of Ocean Island, the ocean, and the neighboring shore line.

These doors were reached through passages six or eight feet long, and almost as narrow as the doors themselves. The walls of these passages were of concrete, and the landing on which they opened inward was correspondingly small, for the stairs narrowed very materially just before they reached the top, the space inside the shaft being taken up by massive flying buttresses of con-

crete—or great structural details, which seemed to answer that description more nearly than any other.

On their previous visit the detectives had naturally assumed that these buttresses, or whatever they might be called, were solid, and had been designed to add strength in some way to the tall structure. That supposition had appeared to be confirmed by the fact that, when viewed from the platform outside of the tower, the walls between the doors were not broken by any openings. The inside walls were similarly unbroken, although it was evident that there was a great deal of space to be accounted for in case the buttresses were not solid concrete.

Having failed to find the slightest evidence of a secret door inside, Nick, his two assistants, and the police went outside and made the circuit of the overhanging iron platform, or balcony, which was not more than four feet wide. Still no break in the walls was to be seen, save for the four deep doorways.

But something else was noted at once. The walls continued up from the floor of the platform for a height of perhaps nine or ten feet, well over their heads. There they stopped, except at the corners, where ornamental pinnacles soared several feet higher. The top of these main walls did not mark the top of the tower, however. The structure receded at that point for several feet, then rose again for some distance farther, and finally spread out into a fantastic roof or cap, suggestive of a Japanese temple, the overhanging eaves of which were almost over their heads, as they looked up from the platform.

It did not take long to see that if the buttresses at their present level were hollow they formed good-sized rooms at each corner of the main walls, between the doors, and could also be reached easily from above by means of skylights in the recessed roof which intervened between the top of the main walls and the smaller square of walls which carried the tower to its final culmination. Moreover, these skylights, if they existed, would furnish light and air to the hidden rooms beneath.

Nick reasoned this out aloud, and Chick capped the climax by producing a short iron ladder, which he had noticed lashed to the railing of the platform. The ladder was quickly put in place against one of the main walls, and Nick mounted it.

The recessed walls above consisted largely of glass, set in a steel frame, and forming a "lantern" similar to that of a lighthouse, inside of which was a powerful electric light. This light was now burning almost blindingly, and enabled the detective to see everything with the utmost distinctness.

Nick's head had hardly mounted above the outer walls before he turned and called down excitedly:

"Come on! There are skylights partly open, and the roof is of opaque glass. We've found the secret!"

He scrambled over the low parapet, formed by the top of the main wall on that side, and Chick and the rest hastily mounted after him.

Suffice to say that they found three of the curious buttress rooms occupied. Gertrude Rollins was in one, and each of the others contained one of the girls who had previously been reported as missing.

The two whose confinement had been longer, were in a pitiable condition of mind and body—in fact, they seemed to be almost mental wrecks. They were hysterical, and little could be learned from them. Gertrude,

however, although weak and overwrought, gave promise of quick recovery.

It was from her they learned the conditions and purposes of the unique and harrowing imprisonment of the girls. She had never been thrown into direct contact with any of the others, but it was reasonable to assume that her experiences had, on the whole, been more or less representative.

Jules Legrand, it appeared, was a hypnotist, among other things, and was planning an elaborate and startling act for use on the vaudeville stage. He had hypnotized Gertrude Rollins the first time he tried, before she knew what he was about. Since then, however, she had been able to resist, thanks to her intelligence and strength of will.

It was obvious, however, that Legrand's other victims had not found it possible to do so, and that repeated experiments had so affected their minds that they would be obliged to undergo a long course of treatment, which might not, after all, restore them to their normal condition.

The plan of demanding a ransom in Gertrude's case had, most likely, been an afterthought.

Legrand's accomplices, the two managers, Pettus and Dawson, together with several of the men under them, were duly brought to trial, convicted, and sentenced to varying terms on Blackwell's Island and at Sing Sing.

All efforts to locate Legrand failed completely, however. It looked as if he must have been a magician as well as a hypnotist, and had contrived to make himself invisible.

Mrs. Byron West was repeatedly hauled over the coals in an effort to establish a connection between her and the mysterious proprietor of the Island resorts, but every attempt came to nothing. She persistently denied that she knew or had ever heard of any one of that name.

Chick was certain that he had made no mistake in tracing Legrand to Mrs. West's apartment house, but he had not taken the trouble to make sure that the man had actually entered her apartment. That had been taken for granted, but when it came down to the scratch it was found impossible to obtain legal proof of it.

And there the case of the Crystal Maze seemed to drop.

THE END.

Nick Carter and his assistants, who were not in the habit of giving up the game until the last man was out, continued to hope that some day they would obtain new evidence that would enable them to get track of the missing Jules Legrand. You will read about their efforts in this respect in the next issue of this weekly, No. 101, out August 15th, in the story entitled, "A New Serpent in Eden; or, Nick Carter and the Burned Cob."

AN INSURANCE AGENT'S BOY.

An insurance agent hired a boy to mind the office and run errands, and he had a long talk with the lad, telling him what he must do and what he must not do. The boy got along all right until recently, when the agent entered the office, and found him up to mischief.

"See here, my boy," said the agent, "didn't I tell you just what you'd have to do, if you stayed here?"

"You did," replied the boy; "you said I mustn't sing or whistle; that I mustn't have boys up here; that I must come at eight, and quit at five; that I was to keep up the fire, sweep out, run errands, and be civil; that I was to be careful and lock the door, scrape my feet on the mat, keep my knife away from the furniture, and not idle my time away. You told me all this, but you didn't say a word about my not pouring ink on the cockroaches."

The Perfume of Madness.

By J. KENILWORTH EGERTON.

CHAPTER I.

On all the continent of Europe there is no busier man than Le Garde, the chief of the French secret police; but while his brain is charged with a mass of detail which would overwhelm a less disciplined organ, and his shoulders carry a weight of responsibility under which many strong men would break, he is never so fully occupied as to be unable to find time to study new men or methods which may be of interest or value to him. Within his own province he is supreme and an autocrat; many of his most trusted and valued assistants are known only to himself; and he directs every inquiry from the investigation of the most insignificant crime against individuals to the watching of conspiracies aimed to overthrow the state itself. With such manifold cares and responsibilities, it speaks volumes for the charm and interest of my friend Mr. Thomas Williams' personality that Le Garde formed the habit of dropping in almost daily at the charming studio apartment which Tommy and I occupied together on the Boulevard Saint-Germain.

On the present occasion the conversation had drifted to woman. "The queerest, but the most interesting, creatures on earth," Le Garde was saying, as he appreciatively puffed a fragrant Egyptian cigarette from a box which did not bear the seal of the government monopoly, and watched Tommy prepare the equally fragrant café à la Turc.

"Confound 'em, they're past all understanding!" exclaimed Tommy ungallantly, as he removed the coffeepot from the brazier at the moment its bubbling contents threatened to boil over.

Le Garde watched him with twinkling eyes as he deftly turned the foaming liquid into the eggshell cups.

"I almost agree with you," said the Frenchman, laughing. "In a long experience I have known many women, and I have seen them under all circumstances; but never have I met two alike, nor never have I been able to predict from previous experience how one would behave under given conditions. For instance, a case which was brought to my observation to-day presents a phase of femininity which I am entirely at a loss to understand."

"That a past master is fallible should make a novice patient under many defeats," acknowledged Tommy, under the soothing influence of his favorite decoction. "Is it possible for you to tell us the circumstances?"

"When the morning papers appear they will be public property, and, so far as I know, no crime has been committed; so there is no reason for secrecy," answered Le Garde, after lighting a fresh cigarette. "It is a case of suicide, the victim a young woman of unusual beauty

whose identity is as yet unknown; and only the unusual circumstances make it of especial interest. In the first place, there is no apparent motive, for she was living luxuriously, and her jewels and a large sum of money were found in her dressing bag; while it is inconceivable that a woman so beautiful should have been the victim of unrequited affection. The method employed was unusual, for drowning, poison, or charcoal asphyxiation is the usual choice of members of the fair sex who wish to end their lives, and the fact that she shot herself was the reason for the occurrence being at once reported to me."

Tommy looked at him inquiringly, and Le Garde hastened to explain.

"On the theory that an apparent suicide may, in fact, be a carefully concealed murder, I have issued instructions that any case which is unusual shall be immediately brought to my attention that I may examine into it before telltale evidence may be inadvertently destroyed. Of course, as a matter of routine, I learn of every case in the daily reports; but with my manifold duties I cannot go into all of them. The fact that this woman's death was caused by a pistol and that her identity could not be at once established, brought it into the category of unusual cases, and within a half hour of the discovery I was on the spot. I found nothing to make me suspicious that a crime had been committed, however, but much to puzzle me."

"If she left no letter of adieu, or explanation, it would be another unusual circumstance," said Tommy; and Le Garde nodded.

"Yes, but in that she conformed to tradition, and only the form of the epistle was peculiar," he said, taking a paper from his pocketbook. "This was found on her writing desk." He handed over the paper, and Tommy read it and gave a free translation.

"TO THE COMMISSARY OF POLICE: No one but myself is any way accountable for my death. The reason I am ending my life would be of no interest to strangers, and there is no chance that my real name and rank shall ever be known. Public exposure of my poor mortal remains will not lead to identification, which would, in any case, serve no purpose. In my dressing case will be found sufficient money to give me modest burial, and I pray you that it be accorded to me at once, just as my body is found. Above all, I pray that my hair shall not be in the slightest degree disturbed or disarranged."

Tommy looked at Le Garde expectantly when he had finished his translation.

"You see that it is written by a person of education, and probably a woman who has enjoyed position, for a person of no particular rank would not use that expression," he continued. "I may say that her appearance, her clothing, and the appointments generally bear out that theory. The wording of the note does not indicate insanity, for there is nothing of depression in it; it is clear, concise, and to the point. Only the closing sentence points even to eccentricity, but it is such an unusual request that I can make nothing of it."

"As you say, this note is evidently written by a person of education, but the handwriting is peculiar," said Tommy, who had been examining it closely.

Le Garde smiled. "A very evident attempt to disguise her ordinary cigraphy," he answered. "I noticed that,

but I could see no reason for it, for not a scrap of her handwriting can we find with which to compare it."

Tommy had picked up an enlarging glass, and, examining the paper closely, he suddenly raised it to his nose and sniffed.

"What a peculiar perfume!" he exclaimed.

Le Garde looked at him approvingly. "Evidently all of your senses are alert, Mr. Williams. Let me tell you another curious point in that connection. That sheet of note paper—which you can see is unusual—corresponds exactly in tint, texture, size, and watermark with the blank paper in her writing case; but about the remainder there is not the slightest trace of perfume. Her sachets, toilet water, and perfume are all the same scent, *Parma Violet*, but not another article about her person or effects has the perfume of this note which, as you say, is most peculiar. In fact, it is one with which I am entirely unfamiliar, although I have had occasion to make a more or less exhaustive study of perfumes. I have ordered that neither the body nor the chamber in which it was found should be disturbed—would it interest you to examine the scene and body of the suicide? It is not far from here—in the *Rue de l'Echelle*."

"The 'Street of the Ladder'—perhaps one which leads to adventure," answered Tommy, as he placed his empty cup on the tray. "I should esteem it a privilege, for you have aroused my curiosity most effectually."

The presence of a uniformed officer in the boxlike room ordinarily occupied by the concierge was the only indication that anything unusual had occurred in the quiet house on the narrow street leading off the *Place de l'Opéra*, but a man in plain clothes was loitering on the stairway, and he shook his head and expressively opened his hands to signify that they were empty when Le Garde asked him if anything new had been discovered. There was a twinkle in his eyes as he glanced from Tommy to me which made me look closely at him, and I recognized the grinning face of the cabman who had been so ubiquitous when Le Garde was watching us as suspicious characters.

The apartment to which we were admitted by another plain-clothes man was, as Le Garde had intimated, luxuriously furnished, and displayed evidence of taste and wealth; but there was an entire absence of photographs and the small personal things which give a place a distinctive and homelike atmosphere.

"No one has called, and I have discovered nothing new," reported the officer in charge laconically, and Le Garde motioned us to follow him into the adjoining room.

It was a large bedchamber, simply but tastefully furnished, the dressing table covered with a profusion of the dainty articles which a woman finds use for in her toilet. On the bed, attired in a simple white evening gown and having all the appearance of being in a peaceful sleep, lay the body of a woman, only the waxlike pallor of the face betraying that it was the sleep which knows no awakening, and a powder-blackened spot on the left side of the corsage suggesting the cause.

Le Garde had not exaggerated her beauty; the straight nose, delicately chiseled lips, and high forehead, gave her the profile of a classic cameo, and above the aristocratic face, as carefully dressed and arranged as if she had been going to a ball instead of the grave, was a mass of beautiful golden hair. Her arms lay at her sides, a small revolver loosely clasped in the palm of the right

hand, the index finger still on the trigger. The left hand, beautifully shaped and exquisitely cared for, lay half open at the edge of the bed nearest to us, and Tommy, to whose artistic eye its beauty made strong appeal, stooped to look at it more closely. Suddenly he straightened up and beckoned to Le Garde.

"I think that one of your puzzles is solved," he said quietly. "I wondered why that writing seemed familiar, and here is the explanation." On the side of the second finger was a tiny ink stain from a soiled penholder. "It is not disguised writing; it presents only the peculiarities common to the handwriting of all left-handed people."

Le Garde carefully examined the telltale ink stain, and then looked at Tommy inquiringly.

"You are quite correct, Mr. Williams," he acknowledged frankly. "It does explain the peculiarity of the handwriting, but you solve one puzzle only to create a more serious one. Can you explain why a left-handed person should employ the right hand to hold a pistol?"

The discovery of the tiny ink stain by Tommy's sharp eyes, and the deductions drawn from it, and the peculiarity of the handwriting, changed the entire aspect of the case. Le Garde's interest, which had been that of the student of psychology in the problem of motives, suddenly became that of the official whose duty it is to detect crime, for a grave doubt was raised as to the probability of the wound being self-inflicted, a doubt which he at once set himself to justify or disprove. He passed to the other side of the bed and bent over the hand which held the pistol, carefully examining the position of the weapon; but when he straightened up his expression indicated even greater uncertainty.

"Perhaps the last puzzle is already answered; perhaps we are farther from a solution than before," he said doubtfully. "Until we have further data, I am unwilling to say that this is not a case of suicide; but of one thing I am certain—this pistol was placed in the woman's hand after her death!"

Tommy and I both bent to examine the hand in which the butt of the pistol loosely rested, but we could discover nothing which justified his conclusion.

"You have often reminded me that I am but an amateur, and I fear that I must acknowledge it, for I confess that I am unable to follow you in that deduction," said Tommy incredulously.

Le Garde shrugged his shoulders. "My dear sir, my investigation of this case—until your significant discovery put me on the right track—was unworthy even of a novice. This thing is so evident that I should have noticed it at once, for the apparent conditions are absolutely irreconcilable. I will demonstrate it to you."

He gently raised the right wrist, moving the hand as little as possible; but the pistol fell from it and clattered to the floor.

"This is the proof, if one knows how to read it," he continued, stooping to pick up the weapon. "Death from a bullet which goes through the heart or injures the great brain centers is generally instantaneous, as we measure time, but there is just that fraction of a second difference which in a case like this, for example, has a wonderful significance. Following the siege of Paris and the Commune, it was my unpleasant duty to be present at the execution of more than six hundred *communards*, and you may remember that they were led out in batches

and shot. They invariably went down in one of two ways—either suddenly collapsing, as if their bones had been withdrawn from their bodies, or pitched forward or backward with uplifted arms and opened hands. Examination of the bodies afterward showed me that the manner of falling depended upon where the bullets struck them. Those who were shot in the head went down as does a poleaxed bullock; while those whose death came from cardiac injury pitched forward or fell back. Many times the hands of the former were tightly clenched; while the latter almost invariably clutched spasmodically at the grass for several seconds. I imagine that the reason for my deduction is now clear to you?"

"Perfectly—if that is an 'invariable rule,' answered Tommy; and Le Garde smiled at the qualification.

"I hesitate to say that any rule is invariable, but the subsequent analysis of many hundreds of cases of suicide has failed to show an exception," he said. "In several cases where the pistol had been firmly held against the breast, it had been thrown so far away by the subsequent reflex gesture that its distance from the body raised grave doubts as to the wound being self-inflicted. In only one case was there apparent contradiction. The pistol was found firmly clasped in the hand of the victim; but a criminal who was shortly afterward executed for another crime confessed to me that he had held the fingers of the dead man—whom he had previously shot—in that position until rigor mortis developed."

"A gruesome vigil!" exclaimed Tommy, with a shudder.

"But not so gruesome as the one which the condemned man keeps until *Monsieur de Paris* calls him for his last toilet," answered Le Garde grimly. "A man will force himself to do much to avoid risk of that; but it must have been a harder task to place a pistol in this hand if a man had been guilty of causing the death of such a beautiful creature. I should have small compunction in sending any one so heartless to the guillotine."

"May I ask if your sympathy will lead to the observance of the poor girl's last requests?" inquired Tommy.

Le Garde's lips settled into stern lines which belied the sympathy in his eyes as he looked at her elaborately dressed mass of beautiful golden hair.

"Inclination and official duty cannot always be reconciled," he said regretfully. "It is imperative that there should be an autopsy, and I fear that the body must be sent to the morgue, unless identification is speedy and convincing. Your fortunate discovery has made a searching investigation absolutely necessary."

"Then I deeply regret that I ever entered this unfortunate room," answered Tommy dolefully.

Le Garde looked at him curiously. "Mr. Williams, I once told you that we do not encourage the amateur investigator of crime; but except for the absence of official connection with the police, I hardly regard you in that light," he said significantly. "Perhaps you may be good enough to give me your assistance, and between us we may reach such a speedy solution that the routine may be avoided. Believe me, no association could be more agreeable to me nor more apt to lead to success."

For a moment a gleam of gratification came to Tommy's eyes; but all personal elation died out of them when he looked at the beautiful dead face, and when he turned to Le Garde his own expression was very Mephistophelean.

"Such assistance as it may be in my power to render is entirely at your service," he answered quietly, and Le Garde motioned to us to follow him into the adjoining room.

CHAPTER II.

The history of the case which we learned during the evening—first the bare outline from Le Garde, and then the results of separate lines of inquiry from subordinates who had been detailed to work on it—was more interesting as an illustration of the French method of criminal investigation than enlightening as to the mystery surrounding the girl's death; for each report served to bring out a fresh complication. The house in which the tragedy had occurred was a *dépendance* of a neighboring hotel patronized principally by transient Americans; while the *dépendance* itself was usually occupied by strangers of other nationalities who made longer stay in the French capital. Such meals as were required by the guests, in their apartments were served from the hotel restaurant; but otherwise the buildings were entirely distinct, and the *dépendance* had its own private entrance, concierge, and staff of servants.

"Madame de Sauvigny" was the name by which the dead woman had been known at the hotel, and she had arrived there three days before; the apartment being previously reserved by telephone by the Count de Thonier, who was a frequent patron of the establishment. She came to the hotel alone in a public cab, and during her brief stay there had received absolutely no visitors. According to the slip made out for the police, a formality required of all visitors to Paris, she was twenty-one years of age, a widow, and a resident of Geneva, Switzerland. Such meals as she had taken at home had been served in her apartment; but she had dined out each night, returning about midnight. The concierge was unable to say whether she returned unescorted; for in answer to her ring he had opened the front door with the automatic connection from his room, but watching through the window into the hallway he had noted that she entered alone. Two or three times each day she had been called to the telephone, and she had received several letters; but if she had written any letters she had herself carried them to the post. The discovery of her death had been made by the chambermaid, who, believing that the lady had as usual gone out for dinner, had entered the apartment to prepare the bedchamber for the night.

The concierge was positive that she had received no visitors that afternoon, for he had been constantly on duty, and only guests of the *dépendance* had entered. None of the employees had seen strangers about the place, and the maids and valets were continually passing through the halls.

On her arrival, the hotel proprietor had received her personally, and he was convinced that she was a Frenchwoman, for her pronunciation was perfect and free from even the Swiss accent.

The waiter who had served her meals was equally sure that she was a German, for that was his native language, and she had given her orders in it, the only thing noticeable being that she had the soft pronunciation of southern Germany. He had served her with tea at four that afternoon, and noticed nothing unusual in her manner. He was, so far as any one knew, the last person who had seen her alive.

"And you have reason to believe that the name is an assumed one?" asked Tommy, when Le Garde had finished his recital.

"At any rate, it is unknown to the police of Geneva, who have, of course, a complete record of all their citizens," he answered. "Further than that, the note which she left implied that it was not her own. Our first endeavor was to ascertain what the Count de Thonier knew about her; but he left Paris the day she arrived, sailing for South Africa from Marseilles the following day. It will be at least three weeks before we can communicate with him, even by cable. He is a great sportsman and explorer, has been all over the world, and spends more than half his time in travel."

A knock on the door was followed by the entrance of a cabman escorted by a plain-clothes man, and he at once identified the body as that of a woman whom he had driven from the station on the arrival of the Calais-Dover express three days before. She had been accompanied to the cab by a gentleman who spoke with her for a few minutes in a language he could not understand, but which he was quite sure was not German.

Le Garde smiled grimly when he had dismissed him.

"Another piece of evidence that Madame de Sauvigny wished to cover her tracks," he said. "Her police slip states that she came from Geneva via Basle. That train arrives at the same time as the Calais-Dover express, but at a station on the other side of the city. Now, Mr. Williams, here is our case. This woman has lived at the hotel for three days, arriving, presumably, from England. She is recommended here by the Count de Thonier, who will be inaccessible for at least three weeks. There is nothing in her effects which gives the slightest clew to her identity, and we have no proof that any one but the hotel servants were in her room during her stay. On the other hand, when she is found dead from a bullet wound, the proof is convincing that the pistol which apparently caused her death was placed in her hand after it had been discharged. The presumption from her handwriting and the ink stain is that she was left-handed, which seems to be the most definite thing we know about her. The note that she left indicates that she deliberately committed suicide; but the contradictory circumstantial evidence suggests murder, or, at least, the fact that some one else was present at the time of, or shortly after, her death. The requests in her farewell note are peculiar; but the most puzzling thing about it is the mysterious perfume which is entirely distinct from that of the Parma Violet, which she used in all of her toilet preparations. You have all of the facts which I possess up to date, but I will tell you that I have a half dozen men trying to locate the cabmen who may have driven her during her stay here, and practically any number of additional men are available if you can suggest any way in which they would be useful."

"The circumstantial evidence presents a mass of contradictions; but before trying to reconcile them, let us see if there is anything to be determined from the direct evidence," said Tommy cautiously, and I realized that he hesitated to give an opinion before Le Garde. "First, the Count de Thonier seems to be the most tangible person—how much do you know about him?"

"Practically no more than I have told you. He is a member of an old family, and his title is genuine. He is possessed of independent means and able to follow his

own inclinations, which seem to lead him into exploring out-of-the-way corners of the world, and killing big game."

"And his age?"

"About thirty-two, I should judge," answered Le Garde. "His life here in Paris has, I believe, been discreet, and he has never been in any serious scrape that we know of."

"And are you convinced that it was he who engaged the apartment for this woman?" asked Tommy; and Le Garde shook his head.

"There is no evidence to the contrary, for we know that three days ago he was in Paris; but all that we know positively is that his name was used. If he did vouch for her to that extent, it is rather curious that he should not have called upon her before his departure."

"Exactly," answered Tommy seriously. "It would be quite possible for any one to give his name over the telephone, and knowing that he was setting out almost immediately on a long sea voyage an impostor would have little fear of discovery. Of course, I can venture no opinion as to who is concerned with the girl's death; but, it is safe to say that the voice which came over the telephone, whether it belonged to Count de Thonier or some one else, could explain the things which seem so mysterious to us."

"And I should like very much to have the owner of that voice under my thumb!" exclaimed Le Garde savagely, as his eyes turned involuntarily to the door leading into the death chamber. "As that is, for the moment, impossible, let us consider the other circumstances."

"Which naturally leads us to the note," continued Tommy. "Madame de Sauvigny was, judging from her appearance and surroundings, essentially dainty. It is improbable that the ink stain could have remained unnoticed on her finger for any length of time, and on her toilet table I noticed pumice and oxalic acid, which would have removed it easily. Therefore, it is probable that she used a pen shortly before her death, and the paper on which her farewell note was written corresponds exactly to the paper in her portfolio except that it is perfumed. If it were not for that mysterious scent, we might safely assume that her last epistle is the one which you have in your letter case."

"And, if I am not mistaken, this gentleman can solve the mystery of the perfume," said Le Garde, rising and shaking hands with a middle-aged Frenchman whom he introduced to us as Monsieur Duclos, chief chemist and manager for the Maison Poirrot, the famous manufacturers of perfumes.

"Monsieur Duclos, I have come across a perfume which is entirely new to me, and, remembering the instructions you gave to me when I was engaged in the stolen-document investigation for the foreign office a few months ago, I am again calling upon you for enlightenment," he continued, taking his letter case from his pocket, but Duclos quickly put out his hand to restrain him, and opened both of the windows.

"Before you produce it, we must purify the air," he said, sniffing, and I noticed that the edges of his nostrils quivered like those of a thoroughbred horse. "Here is the perfume of tobacco, which is delightful in its proper place; the scent of Parma Violet, which is always delicious; and"—after several audible sniffs—"I should say, the reek of gunpowder smoke, which is an abomination."

"How admirable is the perfectly trained faculty!" ex-

claimed Le Garde, with a significant glance at Tommy; and Duclos complacently accepted his tribute.

The fresh air quickly purified the atmosphere to his satisfaction, and he extended a fat, pudgy hand for the note. He was a good-natured, ruddy-faced man, with mild blue eyes which beamed benignantly through large, gold-rimmed spectacles; but no sooner had he sniffed at the paper than he let it fall from his hands, the color faded from his face, and his eyes became round with surprise and terror.

"The perfume of madness!" he exclaimed, in horror. "What devilry has it accomplished, that I find it in your hands?" Le Garde picked up the note, and, after holding it to his nostrils for a minute, carefully replaced it in his pocket.

"From your very evident disapproval, I judge that it is not one of the preparations sold by your house?" he said interrogatively.

Duclos made a violent gesture of protest. "The Maison Poirrot has a reputation!" he exclaimed excitedly. "No other house can be allowed to possess secrets of which we are ignorant, and to us a new perfume may mean a fortune. In this we thought that we had discovered one which would surpass all others, and until this moment I believed that we possessed the entire existing supply of raw materials for its preparation; but rather than allow such a devilish thing to be sold the Maison Poirrot would go down in defeat and failure." Le Garde closed the windows, and, after telling the officer on duty in the hall that we were not to be disturbed, he turned to Duclos.

"I suspect that devilry *has* been accomplished," he said sharply. "Now, Monsieur Duclos, time is an object. Kindly tell us all that you know about this perfume."

The chemist had, in a measure, recovered his equanimity, and he took the chair which Le Garde indicated by a gesture and drew a small leather case from his pocket. It contained several small vials, each holding, perhaps, a half ounce of liquid, and, selecting one of them, he held it up to the light. The contents were of a pale amber-color, but seemed to glow and radiate a peculiar light which was not entirely due to reflection.

"Gentlemen, were I to drop this small flask on the floor and shatter it, allowing the contents to volatilize in the confined atmosphere of this room, in fifty seconds we should all be madmen, tearing at each other's throats, and controlled only by a lust for blood," he said dramatically; and as I noted the clumsiness of his stumpy fingers and the fragile glass held between them, I wished that Le Garde had left the windows open. "The contents of this vial represent the ultimate products of distillation of many hundredweights of flowers, and would be sufficient to prepare thousands of gallons of perfume more delicate than that of the note paper; but that perfume will never be made; for, as I told you, it is the perfume of madness!" The dramatic instinct is inherent in the Gallic race, and Duclos paused impressively that its statement might have its full effect.

"I may say, gentlemen, that this case contains my failures," he continued, replacing the vial. "Each of these small flasks contains an essence upon which we built great hopes, and which, for one reason or another, it has been impossible for us to use; but none represents such great disappointment and financial loss as the perfume of madness. The flowers from which it was distilled were obtained at great expense after a sample had been submit-

ted to us. It is a species of orchid which grows only in one spot, so far as we know; and that spot is itself unknown to us."

"Tell us all about it—where you got the flowers and from whom," interrupted Le Garde, a little impatiently; but Duclos looked at him placidly and refused to be hurried.

"All in good time, my dear sir; but it requires certain explanations," he said. "You must know that the Maison Poirrot employs agents and collectors all over the world, and they are constantly on the lookout for something new. Is an unknown flower discovered in an African jungle, who will pay so well for it as the Maison Poirrot? No one! Should a prospector for gold in the Andes find a blossom with a unique perfume, he is better rewarded than if he were successful in his original quest. Therefore we—that is to say, the Maison Poirrot—control exclusively the '*Extract Himalaya*' distilled from flowers which grow only on a single square mile of all this earth's surface; the '*Parfum des Incas*,' which comes originally from a Peruvian jungle; and many others which are inimitable. To gather the flowers many men die each year in pestilential swamps, and others are killed by wild beasts and savages in jungle and desert, that my lady may charm the most susceptible of the senses by the fragrance which she exhales."

"And incidentally that the proprietors of the Maison Poirrot may accumulate riches," remarked Le Garde dryly; and Duclos shrugged his shoulders.

"I prefer to think of it in another way, and to prove that we are not entirely mercenary, I shall tell you the history of our last failure," he protested. "It is now two years since our agents in Bombay sent to us a couple of dried specimens and a small cask of fat containing, perhaps, two hundred blooms of an orchid which was unknown to even the most enthusiastic collectors of that plant. From that small cask we distilled in our laboratory a minute drop of essence which was of such great power, such penetrating sweetness, and possessed of such lasting properties, that we anticipated another triumph for the Maison Poirrot. We immediately cabled for full particulars, and ordered our agent to purchase the entire offering; but while he forwarded to us a considerable quantity of the blossoms, the particulars concerning their place of origin were most meager. He informed us that they were brought to him by a native who himself professed to be ignorant of where they grew, and claimed to be acting as the confidential broker for some mysterious firm. The directions as to picking the blooms and packing them in the fatty medium supplied by our agent were scrupulously carried out; but the only indication of the place where they grow is the fact that it required two months to deliver the flowers in Bombay after the order was given and the casks supplied. Many thousands of francs were advanced by the Maison Poirrot before the unlucky day on which those precious casks were delivered to our laboratory. Ah! gentlemen, that a tragedy was averted is due to the good fortune which has always followed us—the Maison Poirrot."

"And have you now arrived at the point of your story from which we may derive information which may be of value to us?" asked Le Garde sarcastically; and Duclos smiled.

"All information is of value, if one knows how to use it," he answered imperturbably. "For example, had I not

known the danger of the condition which is known as 'seeing red,' I might now be a murderer, instead of a peaceful chemist and manufacturer of perfumes. The perfume was so unique that I personally superintended every experiment made in extracting it from the flowers during the tedious process of distillation, and when, after infinite care and labor, I succeeded in obtaining two drops of the concentrated perfume, I felt that the fortune of the Maison Poirrot was, indeed, assured. In the privacy of the innermost office I gathered the members of the firm to exhibit our new-found treasure, and I may say that each of them is my dear friend. Cautiously I inhaled the exquisite perfume which represented so much to us, and then prepared to pass the retort containing it to my senior. When I looked at him I could hardly believe my eyes, for a red veil seemed to be before them! I realized the danger of inhaling the perfume from any concentrated extract, but never had any perfume produced such an effect; for I was conscious only of the spot in his throat where a tiny pulsation betrayed an artery, and became possessed by an almost uncontrollable desire to tear it open. The glass retort fell to the floor and shattered; and the next few minutes will always be to me a nightmare which I should wish to forget. The respectable, sedate, and peaceful gentlemen who compose the firm suddenly became demented; the office where so many peaceful measures for the extension of the business of the Maison Poirrot have been planned was worse than the disturbed ward of a bedlam, and we bit, scratched, and pummeled each other as we rolled, a struggling mass, on the floor. We were saved from tragedy, gentlemen, only by the opportune interruption of our clerks, who, with rare presence of mind, broke open the windows and doors to come to our assistance and allowed the overpowering vapor to be dissipated. That room has been useless since. It has been washed, scraped, painted, and papered, but the perfume of madness lingers in it. We have experimented with such peaceful creatures as doves and rabbits, but under the influence of the perfume of those devilish orchids they become mad and rend each other. The contents of this little flask represent the last portion of the distillation; there are no more of the flowers in France, and I can assure you that no more will be imported by us—that is to say, the Maison Poirrot. Gentlemen, it is well named the perfume of madness, and I am curious to know how you became possessed of it."

"Will you tell us first how much of the perfume it required to scent that note paper?" asked Tommy eagerly.

Duclos smiled and made a gesture of helplessness. "Figure to yourself the most minute particle which would be revealed by the strongest magnifying glass, and divide it into a billion parts. Divide each of those again by a billion, and perhaps the resulting fraction would scent all of the note paper which has been manufactured for a hundred years," he said; and Tommy smiled in return.

"I could hardly make those calculations without pencil and paper. We will take it for granted that it is sufficiently minute. Would it be possible to transmit the perfume directly from the flower, or would a chemical process be necessary?"

"To get the perfect product which shall be lasting, science must assist nature, or we—that is to say, the Maison Poirrot—would find our occupation gone," answered Duclos. "I may say, however, that the dried flowers of this orchid retain their perfume to a quite un-

usual degree, and while its effect is not so marked as the concentrated extract obtained by distillation, it is still sufficiently powerful to excite the combative instinct, as I have demonstrated by careful experiments on men and animals."

"And would it be asking too much if I requested the loan of a blossom to confirm those experiments?" asked Tommy; but it was only at the earnest solicitation of Le Garde that Duclos would even listen to such a proposition. He finally gave a grudging assent, and promised to let him have it in the morning.

"Now I am prepared to satisfy your curiosity," said Le Garde, again drawing the note from his pocket. "This paper contains what purports to be the farewell message of a beautiful woman who committed suicide."

Duclos started violently from his chair and gave an exclamation of horror.

"Do not believe it!" he exclaimed. "Unless you have the evidence of your own eyes that death was by her own hand, use all of your wonderful skill to track down her murderer; for the death of one person will not satisfy the blood-lust which is excited by the perfume of madness!"

"Such skill as I may have will be used to solve the mystery, and I shall have the invaluable assistance of Mr. Williams," answered Le Garde, smiling; and Tommy, who was evidently wearied by the chemist's volubility, bowed his acknowledgment and offered his hand to him.

"To have a clear brain I must sleep," he said. "I shall be on hand in the morning, and, perhaps, we can find a connection between the perfume and the lady's death."

TO BE CONTINUED.

The Syndicate of Crime

Or, King Nelson's Puzzling Quest.

By HARRIE IRVING HANCOCK.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 22 of NICK CARTER STORIES. If you have not read the preceding chapters, get the back numbers from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER XLII.

IS STAGGERED.

As flesh is only human, and he had not breakfasted at all on that exciting day, King Nelson's first step was to have a bountiful meal served in the dining room. From there he went to his office, accompanied by the three men.

For half an hour, cigars were indulged in, and the case was not even referred to by any one.

At the end of that time, however, Nelson ordered that Robert Ford be brought into his office.

Ford, as he entered, seemed to have aged by at least ten years. He was haggard, nervous, sullen, clearly on the verge of breakdown, now that his magnificent dream of criminality was utterly shattered.

Moreover, during a fifteen minutes' talk, King Nelson convinced him, lawyer as he was, that the case against him was so complete, thread by thread, that he could not hope to escape a long residence at Sing Sing.

"I am undone," sobbed Ford, breaking down at last. "Yes, I might as well confess, since denial can do me no

good. I shall plead guilty when arraigned. But I do not yet understand how any human mind could be ingenious enough to scent and unearth all this tangled mass of evidence."

"Vance Malloy wishes to speak with you," was the message penciled on a slip of paper that one of the detective's young men handed to him.

"Bring him in," said the chief.

Robert Ford sat with bowed head until the incoming of the ex-king of the green-goods men aroused him.

"Malloy!" cried the lawyer, starting up. "It was you, then, who betrayed me."

"Couldn't have done it if I wanted to," rejoined Vance coolly. "You didn't trust me with enough of your plans for me to be able to give you away. And until I knew that you were caught I held my tongue as to what little I did know. I believe these gentlemen will bear me out in saying that I have utterly refused to talk until now."

"You may talk all you want to now," said Ford wretchedly. "The chain of evidence against me is complete. I have given up hope, and am a ruined man. I can only hope that I shall die during the first week that I wear prison garb!"

"You are willing that I shall talk, then?" inquired Vance.

"Tell all that you know about the case."

"It won't take me long," declared Vance.

Turning to King Nelson, the ex-king of the green-goods men went on:

"Ford was my lawyer; had been for a number of years. I owned a villa over in a lonesome part of New Jersey. It was said," added Vance, with a queer smile, "that underneath the villa there were many subterranean passages. If that is so, it must have been a useful sort of place for some purposes."

"It used to be your country headquarters when you were running the green-goods game," said King Nelson.

"How should I know whether you speak the truth or not?" replied the guarded Vance, with another smile. "Ford also wanted a useful woman, so I hunted up for him The Trompette, who used to be my housekeeper years ago. There was but one other feature of my connection with Ford in this matter. You remember the young woman you saw out at my house?"

"Louise?"

"Yes, Ford hinted to me that it might be worth fifty thousand dollars to Louise if we could succeed in identifying her as some one else. He didn't know for certain, but the chance might come. Louise and I were about to be married at the time, but Ford objected to that. If we were to use her for his purpose, it would be best for her to be single at the time. So, as fifty thousand dollars would be a nice little penny for Louise, I consented. Louise, by the way, is an orphan, and doesn't know who she is. She was no party to the scheme, and didn't have to be. Under the circumstances, it would have been easy enough for two reasonably clever men to make her believe that she was most anybody."

"She was to impersonate Elsie Rockwell, if necessary," said King Nelson. "Now, Lawyer Ford, have you anything more to say?"

"Nothing," replied the lawyer sadly. "It would do me no good."

"Take him to his quarters, then," ordered Nelson of the operative who had brought Malloy to the office.

When the door had closed upon the discomfited scoundrel, Nelson turned to Vance with:

"Malloy, I am going to let you go."

"For which, thanks."

"You have no need to be grateful. I do it simply because I can't prove anything against you. For a while I was on the wrong track. I believed you to be the head of this syndicate of crime which has just come to smash."

"And you now know that I was not?"

"I believe you knew no more of the matter than you have admitted. It is not the first time that I have been considerably in error at the beginning of a case. Now, Vance, I want to have another word to say to you. You have at your house a young woman whom I believe to be good and pure. You have tired of evil life, and you want to wed her and try to be as decent as you can the rest of your life."

"It's going to be a hard job for a fellow with a past like mine, isn't it?" questioned Malloy, with a melancholy smile.

"Yes, it is, unless you start right."

"But how start right, after my past?"

There was a ring of the incredulous in Malloy's voice as he looked burningly at the detective.

"Go to Louise, tell her the whole truth about yourself. Don't gloss over a single item."

"She would discard me in a second if I did."

"Better that, then. You say you love her. If you do, do you want to take the risk of ruining her life by concealing such a past as yours from her? Tell her all, and abide unquestioningly by her decision. If you do less than that, you are not even a minor sort of a man, but an utter scoundrel."

Though Vance blanchd at first, he soon replied steadily:

"You are right. Well, it is going to be a hard and bitter scene for me, but—but I believe I will take your advice. You decline to tell me who you are?"

"I must, unless you are satisfied to consider me as a detective from headquarters."

"Well, your own business belongs to you," admitted Vance. "By the way, I wish you would send for that young woman whom you called Blanche Strull."

"For what purpose?"

"I have something of the greatest importance to tell her."

Summoning one of his young men, King Nelson gave the order.

It was not many minutes ere Blanche entered.

"Mr. Malloy has something to tell you," said Nelson.

"Or something to ask you, perhaps, would be the better way to put it," supplemented Vance. "My child, I heard a Luke Strull mentioned in connection with you."

"Yes. My father."

"Your own father?"

"I have always thought so."

"Is this Luke a river character?"

"I suppose he might be described that way."

"Do you know anything of your mother?"

"Not the least. Father always looked queer when I asked him about her."

"He had a very good reason for it, I guess," went on Vance. "He never saw your mother. I don't believe he even knew her name."

Blanche regarded the speaker with burning eyes.

"If you know anything about my mother, sir, I beg you to tell me."

"Her name was Nelson," replied Vance. "or I am greatly mistaken."

"Good heavens!" uttered the detective, starting to his feet.

"I beg your pardon," said Vance, looking at him.

"I beg yours for the interruption. Go on, but be quick."

"I once had a man working for me named Devery," resumed Malloy. "He was a fellow who had been better off once. In those more prosperous days he knew a man named Nelson. He knew Mrs. Nelson, too, and fell in love with her."

King Nelson was breathing heavily now.

"He tried to get the woman to run off with him," continued Vance, "but it was no go. She told her husband. Nelson went to Devery and gave him one of the worst thrashings a man ever had. Devery abducted the woman and her infant, drugged her, and made the railway people believe she was ill. He got her as far as Virginia, but she had taken cold from exposure, and developed pneumonia. Devery had to take her from the train to a hotel. He took an assumed name, and passed Mrs. Nelson off as his wife. She never recovered consciousness from the drugs, but died. Devery buried her as his wife. Scared badly by what had happened, he came back to New York, hunted up Strull, whom he knew, and left the child with that old river pirate. Miss, I guess your name is Nelson."

"And my daughter!" sobbed King Nelson, reeling to where the astounded girl stood, and catching her in his arms. He kissed her tenderly a dozen times. Blanche tried to speak, but sobs choked her utterance.

"It was the effort to find my wife and child that first made a detective of me," explained King Nelson, as soon as he could go on speaking. "Until this moment I have never had a trace of either of them."

"Glad to have done you a service," said Vance, without emotion. "Devery, before he died, put the statement in writing. I've got that statement at my house. It's yours any time you want to come after it, sir."

Leading Blanche to a seat, King Nelson next strode up to the ex-king of the green-goods men, clasping his hand warmly.

"You have done me a greater service than you can ever understand, Vance."

"And now, if you've no objection, I'll hurry home. I've got affairs of my own to attend to," said Malloy, with a queer smile.

"You shall go in a carriage. One of my young men will go from here with you," said King Nelson.

Vance departed.

An hour later, Ike, The Trompett, and Lawyer Ford were safely lodged in jail.

Maria Ramon, in the meantime, had positively identified Elsie as her former charge. A remembered birthmark had put the question beyond doubt.

That night King Nelson slept the sound sleep of the happy and successful.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"CRIME CAN NEVER SUCCEED."

"Yes, sir, I'd like first-rate to stay here and become one of your force," said Reggy, the next day.

It was noon. The ex-tramp had been downtown. The

trip had resulted in a most marvelous change in his exterior.

Not a trace of the tramp was left. Shaven, his hair neatly trimmed, wearing a suit of excellent material, and immaculate linen, the one-time tramp was now as presentable a fellow as one would want to see.

"I am not exactly going to ask for references," said King Nelson, in whose office they were seated. I'd rather have my own opinion of a man than the average reference. But, since you've admitted there was a something in your past, I feel that you ought to tell me a little something about yourself."

"There isn't much to tell," said Reggy simply. "As a youngster, I led the life that the average youngster leads in England when his people are rich and well connected. But I had the bad luck to have an elder brother. My father was the third member of the family. For some reason he seemed to take a bigger fancy to me than he did to my brother Jack. That made Jack hate me. Besides, Jack, who was to be the heir to the estate, felt that the gov'nor spent more of the estate's income on me than he ought to. That made rather hard feelings between us.

"About three years ago, some of the gov'nor's money—quite a bit—was missed from the desk where he had kept it. Brother Jack, with the help of the estate's steward and a couple of rascally servants, managed to swear the thing against me. The gov'nor's love changed to hate for the son whom, he believed, had disgraced his name. He cursed me, drove me out of the house. Well," admitted Reggy sadly, "the gov'nor knows better by this time, for he died the year following.

"I drifted over here. Tried my hand at two or three things, but found myself too slow to keep up with American ways of doing things. Besides, I'd never been trained for any sort of employment. It'd be hard to say just how it began, but I began to roll downhill. With no one to care for, and pride crushed, I suppose I got to the bottom pretty quick. You were the first man in America who ever really made me feel that I had a lost manhood that it was really worth while to try to get back again."

"What is your real name?" asked King Nelson, without inflection.

"Reginald Shepstone."

"Shepstone? Was your father Lord Brockhurst?" demanded King Nelson, rising and lifting down from a shelf a scrapbook, the leaves of which he rapidly began to turn.

"Yes," assented Reggy indifferently. "Jack's got the title now."

"He had it," corrected King Nelson, stopping at one of the pages. "John, Lord Brockhurst, died nine months ago. Shepstone, you have been an American vagrant. You can now return to England and become an English lord."

"Jack dead? What are you talking about?" quivered Reggy, open-mouthed with amazement.

"It's a fact, and the lawyers have been searching for you everywhere. Shepstone—or my lord, if you like—all you've got to do is to sail for England on the next steamer and claim your estates and title."

"I'll claim the estate, you bet," uttered Reggy. "But as for the title, da—dash it! Do you suppose I want to go back to England, live there, and be toadied to by a lot of relatives who turned their backs on me once? Not

much! I'll go over and get all I can for the estates, but I'll soon be back here, prepared to become an American!"

"But I suppose," hinted the detective, with a smile, "that you'll prefer to drop that idea now of entering my employ."

"I'm not going to say another word about that until I return to New York," declared Reggy.

"Well, if you feel like going downtown, I can present you to the lawyer who has been months trying to find you for the London solicitors."

On the day following, the representative of a great diamond house had finished his inventory of the recovered Norwell diamonds.

"These were probably worth about eight millions at the time they were mined," he reported, "but diamonds have gone up greatly within the last few years. I should assess the lot, in round numbers, at fifteen millions."

"I wouldn't recommend putting all these stones on the New York market," went on the expert. "It would be likely to cause a tremendous drop in the value of the stones. You would better let our house dispose of them in various parts of the world, taking a year or so to do so. But, of course, whatever advances on their value Miss Rockwell desires will be promptly furnished by our house."

When none but the detective, Doctor Rockwell, Elsie, and himself were left in the room, Phil, whose face had been clouded for some minutes, rose and went and stood before Elsie.

"The other day," he began, in a voice that trembled, "I asked you to be my wife. You gave me your dear promise. At that time I did not know how rich you were. To-day, now that I have heard that wealth of yours greatly increased, I realize that I must release you from that promise."

Elsie's face blanched, tears sprang to her eyes, though she fought them bravely back as she answered:

"Have you, then, so soon tired of me?"

"Tired of you?" repeated Phil, with a gasp of anguish as he looked at her. "No, no, you should be the last to ask that question. But when I asked you to become my wife, I did not know the great gulf of wealth that stood between us."

"Why should it stand between us?" she asked softly.

"Why, do you not understand that if you and I were to wed, the whole world would say that I was a fortune-hunting adventurer? That I had married you for the great wealth that you would bring to me?"

"If you care more for the world's opinion than for me," came the half-defiant answer, "perhaps you do well to release me."

"Especially," put in Doctor Rockwell dryly, "if you are so little in love with your promised wife that you shrink from the task of managing her fortune for her."

"Spare me a little bit," pleaded Phil, looking piteously from one to the other.

"Let me take a hand in this," interposed King Nelson. "Darrell, do you remember how I fairly ordered you to propose to Miss Rockwell on a rush order?"

"I shall never forget it."

"I did that for the best reason in the world," went on the detective. "You are yourself a young man of mod-

erate wealth, but I knew that once you got an inkling of the immense wealth of Miss Rockwell, you would shrink from declaring your love for her. Yet I felt that, if you did not, both yourself and Miss Rockwell would be losers. So, as soon as my questioning of Maria Ramon gave me an idea of what wealth Miss Rockwell was likely to inherit, I felt that the happiness of both you young people depended upon my giving you the peremptory advice that I did. Are you about to undo my good work in the most foolish manner?"

"Answer me a question," added Doctor Rockwell. "Do you love Elsie as you did when you asked her to be your wife?"

"Heaven knows that I do," was Phil's fervent, yet wretched, answer. "I love her, and I value her love as the most priceless gift life could give me. 'Life's richest jewel,' Nelson says—how truly! And I love her for her dear self alone, better than all the wealth in the world!"

"Then don't let me hear any more of this hedging talk. You two saunter off by yourselves and talk it over. March!"

To such good purpose did they "talk it over," that the subject was never again brought up. Very soon afterward wedding plans and arrangements for a long "honeymoon" changed the course of their thoughts.

At the famous criminal trial that followed, King Nelson appeared in disguise, under another name.

Lawyer Ford received a sentence of twenty years, which he is now serving. Ike Crawford got fifteen years, The Trompette ten.

Luke Strull must have been thoroughly scared for he had not been heard from since the night of his enforced departure for South America.

Reginald Shepstone went to England and claimed the Brockhurst estates. True to his promise, however, he returned to America, ignoring the title. Later, he became a junior partner of Allan King Nelson, aiding that famous detective since in several notable criminal quests. Moreover, it was not long before he and Blanche were planning for their wonderful wedding day.

THE END.

DUST STORMS ON THE ATLANTIC.

Ships crossing the Atlantic in the latitude of the Cape Verde Islands often encounter dust storms of longer or shorter duration.

One of the most remarkable of these paradoxical storms swept down on the German steamer *Argentine* in the summer of 1889. It lasted for four days, during which time the air was so full of dust particles as to make high noon-day almost as dark as the blackest midnight.

When the "storm" was at its height the sailors were kept busy shoveling the dust from the steamer's decks. The machinery was made to work with great difficulty, and at one time the captain had grave apprehensions that they would be dashed upon the Cape Verde reefs.

Sandstorms frequently occur on the Atlantic, but the above is the only instance of a regular dust blizzard of four days' duration in the memory of the oldest sea captains.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Life Term for Feud Fighter.

Kate Tolliver, who, despite his name, is one of the most noted feud fighters Kentucky has ever known, was sentenced to life imprisonment at Olive Hill, Ky., for killing Lafayette Fraley in an old feud.

Convicts Go to Near-by Prisons to Play Ball.

Although prison baseball is nothing new, many of the penitentiaries in the United States having leagues, which play weekly or semiweekly games, interprison games, as played at Leavenworth, Kan., recently were an innovation.

In the morning a team from the Kansas State Penitentiary went to the Federal prison, here, and played a negro organization. In the afternoon the "Brown Sox," another Federal prison team, led by Danny Claire, a former Western League player, went to the Kansas penitentiary and played the Methodist team there.

Smith Keeps Bats in Shade.

Sid Smith, the beefy catcher of the Columbus Senators, uses bats that must be kept in the shade.

Sid smears his bats with a sticky preparation that preserves the wood. If the bats are exposed to the sun, the mixture comes out, making them mean to handle. Hence Sid always stores his bats in a shady spot instead of on the bat rack with the other players' sticks.

Twelve Miles, One Night's Dancing.

A university student, by attaching pedometers to his legs while executing the modern dances, has discovered that a couple travels twelve miles an evening at the dance of ordinary length. Experiments showed that the average for the tango was four-fifths of a mile per single dance and only one-eighth of a mile for the hesitation waltz.

Circus Clown Now Preacher.

The Reverend Frank Hawes, of Bellefontaine, Ohio, has been ordained at Urbana and will become pastor of the Union Baptist Church in Richmond, Ohio. After experiences as grocery clerk, telegraph operator, professional high diver, clown, and circus owner, Hawes chose the ministry.

Autos Drive Out Liverymen.

For the first time since it was founded, Axtell, Kan., is without a livery stable. The general use of motor cycles and automobiles in that vicinity caused the owners of livery barns to sell their horses and vehicles and board up the doors and windows of their empty stables.

Un-American.

Governor Tener was watching a baseball game recently, when Jim Thorpe, the Indian, made a particularly good play. That "reminded" the president of the National League of this story:

The Carlisle Indian school team was playing an up-State nine, for which a newly landed Irishman was covering third base. One of the Indians batted out a three-

bagger, but dashed past the astonished player from the Emerald Isle for a home run. When the cheers for the runner and the jeers for the third baseman had died out, the latter said, in language all the spectators could hear:

"These darned furriners are puttin' this game on the bum."

One Ring for Nine Weddings.

Miss Martha Suddath, when she was married at Warrensburg, Mo., to Frank W. Deering, of Columbia, was wed with a ring that had been used by eight of her maternal ancestors, beginning with her great-great-great-grandmother. The ring has been handed down from one to another, each bride in turn wearing the ring until she has a daughter of her own to become a bride.

Gives Own Life to Save Dog.

"Jack" was yellow and stubby-tailed, and people called him a mongrel, but Charles B. Wilson, a farmer, loved him and gave his life for him. Wilson was rowing on the river near Pittsburg, Kan. The dog, which had been his constant companion for years, swam behind. Suddenly Jack, tired out, sank. Wilson leaped from the boat to save the animal, and was drowned.

Three Drown When Boats are Capsized.

Three persons were drowned recently in Lake Wichita, near Wichita Falls, Texas; two when their boat overturned, and the third while in swimming. D. J. Minnick and Frederick Scott were the men in the capsized boat, and Junius Froman was drowned while out with a swimming party.

Small Necks Found in City.

"Cleveland, Ohio, is the home of small necks." This startling bit of information was compiled by a statistician and corroborated by the haberdashers, who sell millions of collars annually. The average Clevelander's neck is size 13½. Atmospheric conditions that tighten the cords and throat muscles are responsible, physicians declare.

Finds Lost Ring Inside Hog.

A gold ring, lost by Mrs. Felix Arnold, of Three Brothers, Ark., two years ago, was found by John Lee inside a hog which he butchered. The pig was purchased from the Arnold family.

Hens Set on Golf Balls.

Stanley Barrows, a banker, of Park Ridge, Ill., has sold the chickens from his farm near the golf links and has gone out of the poultry business altogether. Golf wrecked the chicken ranch.

"I had to do it," explained Barrows, "because the hens got to interfering with golf. They always wanted to set, and I couldn't break them of the habit. They set on doorknobs or anything that was white or round." We hid everything on the place, and then the hens got to running over on the links. Half a dozen of them would

wait around the seventh green, and when any one approached, they would chase the balls to set on them. By the time a person climbed the big hill, after driving a ball over it, some hen would have it covered. So I had to quit keeping chickens."

Reads Farewell Letter; Dies.

After reading a farewell letter from her husband, who was an inmate of the Greene County, Mo., jail, and under sentence of five years in the penitentiary, Mrs. Edward Hyder, living at Pearl, Mo., threw the letter in the fire and sank back in a chair, dying within a few moments. It is said she died of a broken heart.

Two years ago Hyder attempted to shoot Walter Abbott to satisfy a grudge. He was convicted of felonious assault. The supreme court has just affirmed the sentence.

Convicts Catch Escaped Men.

Two prisoners, members of the disciplinary battalion under the honor system in the military prison at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., who attempted an escape, were captured by fellow members of the battalion and returned to custody.

The members of the battalion were angry at the breach of honor of the two, and, upon volunteering their services to return the men, a score were sent to search the surrounding country.

Armless Man Good Stenographer.

Though his arms were severed within three inches of the shoulder six years ago, David T. Jones, of Baltimore, Md., has become an expert stenographer. He began his study of stenography after an accident had made the amputation of both arms necessary. He learned the principles of shorthand and, then, with the aid of rubber bands to fasten a pencil to the stump of his right arm, he became able to write in an exceptionally neat manner.

Chance Kick Saves Her Life.

Mabel, nine-year-old daughter of Theodore Scott, a wealthy farmer living near Noblesville, Ind., owes her life to the fact that she accidentally kicked off the spark plug on a gasoline engine after the machine had been started to pump water for live stock. Her dress was caught in the flywheel. While she was being whirled around, her shoe accidentally hit the spark plug, knocking it off. The girl was unconscious. All her clothing, except a portion of a sleeve, was torn off. Her entire scalp was scraped off and she was badly cut and bruised in a number of places about the body.

Proves "J. R. R." is Her Long-lost Son.

"J. R. R." is home.

The "Man of Mystery," whose case has puzzled the entire country, is now with his mother after seven years of wandering and suffering. He is Earl Pitkin, and it was his mother, Mrs. H. E. Pitkin, 655 Groveland Park, Chicago, who found him and identified him.

Science had sought to restore his memory by an operation. But it failed and left him without the power of speech. It took a mother's love and a mother's recognition to bring back to the faded eyes the brightness that once was there.

We have told of the many fruitless efforts that were

made to discover the identity of "J. R. R." At first he was known as "J. C. R.," because those initials were on his clothing when he was found unconscious on the railroad tracks near Waseca, Minn., in June, 1907. He was taken to the Minnesota State Hospital at Rochester, where he told a fragmentary story, by signs, of having been slugged and robbed in St. Paul. An operation was performed on his head, and it was found that part of his brain was gone. His vocal chords were partly paralyzed, and after the operation he could not speak. Investigation showed that the initials on the watch he was wearing were "J. R. R." and his "name" was changed accordingly. It is now learned that the watch had belonged to his grandfather, J. R. Rathbun. Shortly after the operation was performed, the Man of Mystery, despairing of success in the effort to ascertain his identity, fled from Rochester and came to Chicago. He was found wandering the streets and was taken to an infirmary at Oak Park. There he remained until identified by Mrs. Pitkin.

And if any one had any doubt that "J. R. R." was Earl Pitkin, they should have seen the look of joy that came over his face when Mrs. Pitkin leaned forward and, patting his cheek, said: "This is my son. He has come home at last, just as I always knew he would."

"J. R. R." was also identified by his brother and sister, and also by a school-teacher, who knew him when he was sixteen years old.

Before starting to explain the long chain of evidence which she had accumulated to prove that she had found her son, Mrs. Pitkin said:

"I am not through because I have found my son. I am going to learn how my son was robbed of the \$5,000 with which he started home from Nevada. I am also going to find the doctor or surgeon who experimented on my boy because he wanted to be famous."

Mrs. Pitkin called out to the dining room:

"When you have finished your breakfast, Earl, come into the parlor."

"I have spent a fortune searching for my son," Mrs. Pitkin resumed. "I wanted to vindicate him. You know he was interested in a mine in Nevada and had caused many of his friends to invest in it. He went out there to get samples of the ore, and then he wrote me he was starting for home with the samples and with five thousand dollars. He never reached here. But he wrote he was coming, and my boy never broke his word. I knew he would come some time."

Just then the tap of a cane on the floor was heard, and through the parlor door there limped a small, spare man. His face was ruddy, as if tanned by outdoor exposure. His hair was iron gray, and he was slightly bald at the crown. He had a gray mustache. The striking thing about him was his bright, twinkling brown eyes. He was helped to a chair.

"First," said Mrs. Pitkin, "I was going to show you the physical proof. Even before I had seen Earl out at Oak Park, I described every mark on his body to the doctors. There is a strawberry birth mark on his back. There is a cut on the inside of his left foot. Take off your shoe, Earl, and show the men."

He exposed his bare foot.

"You see that cut?" said Mrs. Pitkin, pointing to a scar about three inches long just back of the large toe. "Well, that is where he cut himself with an ax when he was a boy. I sewed it up with a piece of violin string

because we lived on the farm and there was no doctor near.

"Then you will see on the second finger of his right hand how the end of the finger is cut off. That was done in a corn sheller when he was a small boy."

The Man of Mystery nodded his head vigorously. All the time he was listening intently. After showing a tattoo mark on his left arm, which she said Earl had made with a vinegar cork and some needles, Mrs. Pitkin turned him over to the interviewers.

"Now, you ask him any questions you want," she said. "I will leave the room, so there will be no possibility of any collusion."

"What is your business?" he was asked. "Was it banking?" He shook his head. "Railroading?" Again he shook his head. "Mining?" A vigorous nod, accompanied by the exclamation, "Aye, aye."

"Aye" and "he, he" constitute the man's vocabulary at present. His tongue as well as his right side, right arm, and right leg are paralyzed.

"Were you ever in the navy?" he was asked. It had been said that he had given the authorities at the infirmary to understand that he had formerly been a sailor.

But he shook his head vigorously.

Many other tests were made before Mrs. Pitkin returned to the room. All of them were in favor of his being her son. And the final one came when Mrs. Pitkin stood behind his chair and said:

"You haven't any mother, have you, Earl?"

The little man's face brightened with a look of happiness that nothing but the love between a mother and son could bring, and he reached up his one active hand, and, grasping an arm, pulled her down and kissed her.

Haunted by Mother's Ghost.

A vision of his dead mother, who pointed an accusing finger at him in his dreams, was responsible for Philip F. Perna, eighteen years old, surrendering himself to the Denver, Col., police and confessing to the forgery of his father's name on a check for \$400.

Perna claims to be the son of a wealthy Philadelphia building contractor. He entered police headquarters and asked to be locked up. He claims he forged the check last September, and his conscience has troubled him since the deed throughout his six months' flight.

Two-hundred Snakes Chase Crew into Rigging.

Two hundred deadly East Indian snakes overrunning his vessel, five heat-crazed yaks doing everything but climbing aloft, and a crew of thirty-five lascars, Hindus, and Chinese threatening every minute to cut one another's throats, made the combination which added ten years to the age of Captain Grant, of the *Brilliant*, a four-masted British bark.

The *Brilliant* recently reached New York after a voyage of 115 days from Hongkong. Life began to be just one continuous nightmare after another almost before Hongkong dropped below the horizon and the excitement continued unabated until the Jersey coast was sighted. With their vessel safely secured to her pier, here, Captain Grant and his officers heaved a sigh of relief which might have been heard a mile away, but wasn't. The captain's hair had turned gray and his weather-beaten

features had so many wrinkles that it resembled a washwoman's thumb.

Just before the ship sailed from Hongkong, its entire crew deserted between watches, and Captain Grant was forced to sign men, who, according to the gallant captain, represented the scum of the Orient. Squared away to the southward, the *Brilliant* became the theater for a series of frightful happenings that made sleep a matter of three winks at a time for the officers.

First of all, it turned out that most of the "able seamen" had never seen any more experience than is required to man a rowboat on a creek. When most of the men were lying in their bunks from seasickness, a big lascar deserted his post at the wheel and made for the forward hatch like a streak of brown. Two seconds later he came up from below, with the entire crew at his heels. Ill or well, they were in the rigging at one leap, shrieking and yelling as they directed the attention of Captain Grant to several squirming objects on the deck.

Four boxes filled with cobras and other poisonous reptiles had broken loose from their fastenings. Two hundred snakes had been given the liberty of the *Brilliant*. The Orientals would not go near the snakes and the captain and his officers were compelled to kill them with clubs. Snakes appeared from hiding places, however, for three weeks after the boxes had been broken, and until the crew was sure that the last had been killed, they persisted in sleeping in the rigging. They had to tie themselves fast with ropes, but they preferred perches to beds where they were liable to wake up at any time to find a terrible-faced cobra in the act of kissing them.

When the boat approached the equator the five yaks on board began showing signs of suffering from the heat. As the days grew hotter, the animals went crazy, one by one.

"They couldn't do it in a bunch," said Captain Grant. "They had to do it one at a time in order to prolong our agony."

The snakes and the heat-crazed yaks virtually scared the crew out of their wits. About the time the last yak had thrown a fit, been killed, and cast overboard, the lascars and Chinese engaged in a pitched battle. The Hindus and others took sides in the argument. Their fights were a daily feature until New York was reached. Instead of trying to prevent trouble, knowing that any interference would be useless, Captain Grant allowed them to fight it out among themselves. At times, however, the friction assumed a serious turn, when some of them displayed knives and threatened to start carving each others' features. It required the utmost diplomacy on the part of the officers to prevent bloodshed.

When the *Brilliant* made fast in New York harbor, Captain Grant set the crew ashore with the remark that they could go as far as they liked in marring each other, but that he would make the first one walk the plank who set foot on his vessel again.

Baby's First Teeth Cost Mother a Finger.

The excitement following the discovery of their baby's first teeth cost Martin Stickley \$50 and his wife, of Benville, Ark., one finger of her left hand. When Mrs. Stickley discovered two teeth in her child's mouth, she thrust her finger on them in a hasty examination. She found that the infant knew what the teeth were for, for the little fellow sank them into his mother's finger.

The slight wound was not given any serious consideration until ten hours later, when Mrs. Stickley began to suffer great pain. A physician was summoned. He amputated the finger and left a bill of \$50 for the operation and trip.

Hospital Holds Baby for Debt.

How the officials of the German Hospital at New York have kept for more than a year a baby born in the hospital and have refused to give him up until the payment of a bill for \$300 was revealed when Justice Crane, of the supreme court, ordered William M. Condon, superintendent of the institution, to give the child to its father.

Matthew McCord is the man who was deprived of the custody of his child. His wife died in the hospital May 25, 1913, two hours after the child was born.

Find Body After Eleven Years.

A mystery of eleven years' standing was solved at Palmer, Mich., when the skeleton of Stephen Nichols was found in the woods by three men on their way to fight a forest fire.

Lying near the bones were a watch, a knife, a leather belt, and a rifle, which were identified as the property of Nichols.

The body was found but a short distance from the road and within two miles of a farmhouse.

Palmer went deer hunting eleven years ago last fall and never returned. It is believed that the young man lost his way and died from exposure.

Many Players Get Start as Miners.

There is perhaps little in the life of a miner to suggest an athletic career, yet many of the greatest players in baseball to-day started to dig out a living in underground tunnels. The world is always ready to give credit to the man who starts at the bottom and reaches the top; so, when a ball player begins several hundred feet below the bottom and makes a success of himself, he is deserving of great praise.

Surely the conditions of the coal miner and prospects for his bettering himself are anything but encouraging. Yet deep down in the dark and murky silence, where hidden danger lurks in every crevice, where the thick, shadowy atmosphere is one of despondency and gloom, the spirit and talent of baseball have found inspiration.

Mordecai Brown, manager of the St. Louis Federals, and famous "three-fingered" pitcher, formerly of the Chicago Cubs, worked for six years in the coal fields of Terre Haute, Ind., at less money per month than he now receives in a day of the baseball season.

Honus Wagner, the greatest shortstop of all time, was "breaker boy" deep down beneath the mining and smelter town of Carnegie, Pa., for three years. Honus, too, draws more money now by many times than he did in his mining days—in fact, he gets more, he modestly admits, than he ever knew was made when he drew a weekly pay check from the mine company.

For eight years Jake Daubert labored in the black and remote interior of the mines at Shamokin, Pa. Now he is a member of the Brooklyn National League club, and is considered by many critics the best first baseman in the game.

Larry Doyle, captain and second baseman of the New York National League champions, earned his bread and butter for five years in the dreary coal mines beneath the town of Breesee, Ill., before he was "found" by Dick Kinsella, owner of the Springfield, Ill., team. His rise to the major league was rapid.

Bobby Veach, hard-hitting outfielder of the Detroit Tigers, and one of the fastest players on bases in the major leagues, was a coal miner near Herrin, Ill., when he was discovered by Charles Stis, then manager of the Peoria, Ill., team. Veach had been in the mines four years.

The famous Hughie Jennings, manager of the Detroit Tigers, and a great shortstop years ago, was a coal miner at Pittston, Pa., for eight years before he became a professional ball player. Now he is not only a great baseball leader, but is also a lawyer. He practices law in Baltimore, Md., during the winter months.

Dog Mothers Little Pig Instead of Pups.

When Jason Osborn, a farmer, of King City, Mo., gave away the small pups belonging to a fox terrier, the mother consoled herself by adopting a young pig, nursing the little animal, and mothering it as if it were her own. The pig appears to be perfectly satisfied with its canine parent, and the two seem contented only when they are together.

Expensive to Treat Friend.

It costs money to treat a friend in Tacoma, Wash., saloons. The antitreatling law, which went into effect when A. A. Fawcett was mayor, is again being enforced, and any person who buys a drink for a friend is liable to arrest and a fine. After an absence of three years Fawcett is again Tacoma's mayor and is insisting that violators of the antitreatling law be punished.

Throng Sees "Baby" Crushed.

Hundreds who were waiting at the New Haven Railroad station, at Woodside, New Rochelle, N. Y., were startled when a bundle of white baby clothes fell from a car window and rolled under the train as it moved out of the station.

Women fainted and men turned their heads. The train was stopped. A brakeman ran back, picked up the bundle and carried it to an excited man and woman who had jumped off the train.

"I guess he's killed, all right," said the brakeman, a tremor in his voice.

The man who was with the woman took the baby. The clothes were torn to shreds. To the woman he said: "Why didn't you put that thing in its case?" Then he held the baby up to the brakeman and made it say "Thank you." The man was a ventriloquist and the baby his dummy.

Flag and Scythe in Soldier's Tree.

On the farm of J. A. Vreeland, two and one-half miles west of Waterloo, N. Y., stands a large tree, from which protrudes about eight inches of a scythe blade and over which floats a large American flag. This tree, with the scythe and flag may be seen plainly from the many New York Central trains which pass by. The conductors have been forced to tell the story of the landmark more often of late, because a new flag is flying from the tree.

Back in 1861 there lived on the farm, with his parents, James Wyman Johnson, sixteen years old. The tree was at that time but a mere sapling. When the tidings of the Fort Sumter bombardment and surrender came, Johnson was cutting underbrush with a scythe. 'His attention was called to the distant sound of rolling drums. Returning to the house, he remarked to his parents, who were standing in the doorway: "I left the scythe hanging in the sapling. Let it hang there until I return."

He strolled off to the village, where, under the excitement of the war talk, he enlisted as a private in Company G, Eighty-fifth New York Volunteers—never to return.

The youth fought in many of the important battles, and, in April, 1864, was with his regiment at Plymouth, N. C., under General John J. Peck. In the early-morning hours of April 20 a force of 7,000 Confederates made a surprise attack on Plymouth, taking 2,000 prisoners. Johnson fell during the battle, mortally wounded. His burial place never was found. Months passed before his parents were notified of his death. The news came as such a shock that both the father and mother died broken-hearted. The tree grew and the snath of the scythe rotted away, leaving the blade firmly imbedded in the crotch. During the last days of her life the mother had kept the tree draped in black. Since her death, members of the G. A. R. have placed a new flag over the blade each Decoration Day.

Boys Coffin, Dies that Night.

Joseph F. Kuehne, a wealthy retired merchant of Jacksonville, Ill., entered a Santa Barbara, Cal., undertaking parlor, selected a casket, filled out his own death certificate, and handed the undertaker a railroad ticket, completing all arrangements for the transportation to his Illinois home. "I'm dying here, among strangers, and I don't want to leave any work for them to do," said Kuehne. He died during the night, and the body was sent East.

Commission to End Strike.

To settle the Colorado strike by a commission to be appointed by the president is the object of a joint resolution, which has been framed and is ready to be presented in both houses of Congress. According to Representative Keating, of Colorado, the resolution embodies the identical plan employed in settling the great anthracite coal strike in Pennsylvania a few years ago.

Five Taken as Moonshiners.

In one of the most important moonshine raids made in eastern Kentucky in months, United States Deputy Collector John N. Francis and a posse of men of Whitesburg, destroyed seven large moonshine outfits, with complete paraphernalia, along lower Rockhouse Creek and Carr's Fork, west of here. One of the stills was in an underground chamber. The moonshiner who operated the outfit was arrested, with four others.

Ball Player Abandons Motor Cycle.

"No more motor-cycle speeding or gay life for me," declared Rube Benton, left-handed pitcher of the Cincinnati Reds, when he recovered from a broken nose and other injuries which were sustained when his speeding motor cycle ran into a street car.

The accident made a new man and a great baseball pitcher out of Benton. Last year he was known as an indifferent pitcher and a second Rube Waddell. Life to him meant only midnight carousals and fast rides. This season he has demonstrated that he is one of the best left-handed pitchers in the game, and his work has kept Cincinnati well up in the National League pennant race.

Prior to the collision with the street car, Benton had been warned to stop speeding and to take care of himself. He needs no warnings now. He has learned that it pays to be sensible.

Boys Whole Town for Dollar.

The town of Bulger, Col., founded three years ago by Colonel Bulger, now awaiting trial at Denver, Col., for killing Lloyd Nicodemus, has been sold for \$1. H. M. Aylesworth, the purchaser, will plant oats in Main Street and raze the one hotel for the construction of a corral. Bulger deserted his municipality because the railroad changed its right of way.

Boy of Fourteen Saves Third Life.

Johnny Little, fourteen-year-old son of Robert Little, of Des Moines, Iowa, has proved himself a hero for the third time within three years. His third and latest experience in life-saving occurred when he rescued Albert McCann, nine years old, from drowning. Young Little dived into the water and pulled McCann out after he had sunk for the third time. Then, by emergency treatment, he brought the boy back to consciousness. His other two experiences in saving lives were quite similar.

Shower Fisher with Worms.

S. B. Hill has been compelled to back up on his contract to purchase all the fish worms the boys of Marion, Ind., would bring him. Hill, who is an enthusiast over fishing, has been fairly showered with worms since he announced he would buy all that were brought him. He has stored thousands in barrels supplied with moist earth, and says he has enough to do him the remainder of the summer.

Stripped Nude by Robbers.

Excel Banett, of Youngstown, Ohio, was found sitting in the Mahoning River by people passing the Market Street viaduct. He was nude and was too bashful to come out where people might see him. He said he had been attacked and robbed during the night by two men, who undressed him and threw him in the river. He did not recover consciousness till morning, when he did not care to show himself to his friends and neighbors.

McKay Did as Was Commanded.

Napoleon Lajoie has a favorite that he tells concerning a youngster by the name of McKay, who had a try-out with Washington some five or six years ago.

"Joe Cantillon, surly and bluff, was the manager in the case," according to Lajoie. A few days after McKay reported there were a couple of men on the bases and it happened to be the kid's turn at bat. McKay was a bit timid at acting for himself in such a situation, and, before going to bat asked Cantillon what to do.

"Use your head," was the gruff reply of the Washington manager.

"McKay promised to do as he was told. On the very first ball pitched, which was thrown with great speed, McKay stuck his head out, and the contact was heard for a considerable distance.

"As he trudged to first, smarting under the pain of the blow, Cantillon bellowed: 'You big rummy, what were you aiming at?'

"Shaking from head to foot, fearful of further criticism, McKay managed to stutter:

"'You told me to use my head—and I did it!'"

A Novel Experiment.

A novel experiment is being conducted at the Cincinnati zoo, where a baby llama is having its front legs straightened with a pair of special braces.

The llama is a South American animal, of the camel family. This valuable little one was born knock-kneed. Every time it tried to walk, its front knees bumped together, and it was all but impossible for it to get around, so the veterinary surgeons devised a special pair of braces. The braces are strapped onto the forelegs, a little tighter each day, until the bones are gradually drawn straight. In the meantime the llama frisks about on its novel crutches, following its mother up and down hills.

Bats Prevent Much Malaria.

Scientific research has proved that bats are deadly enemies of mosquitoes, and that where bats are to be found in great numbers, malarial fevers are unknown. Realizing the necessity of keeping the number of mosquitoes to a minimum, the city council of San Antonio, Texas, is preparing to pass an ordinance prohibiting the killing of bats.

Gets \$50,000 for \$50 She Loaned Forty Years Ago.

Mrs. Joseph Kampe, of Newburgh, N. Y., is to receive \$50,000 for \$50 she loaned to a youth forty years ago, according to a letter from Joseph Patton, the boy who borrowed the money.

"Some day I'll pay you a thousand dollars for every dollar of this," said Patton, when he took the gift, and he now intends to make that promise good.

Mrs. Kampe is the widow of a tailor of this city, who left considerable property. She met Patton at a New York hotel, of which his father was the owner, and loaned him the \$50 to make a start in life. She refuses to tell his whereabouts at this time.

Finds Diamond in Hens Gizzard.

Miss Lillian Tharp, of Parker City, Ind., has recovered a diamond lost four months ago. The gem was found in the gizzard of a hen, which had been killed for use on the table.

Mistakes Diamond for Ice; Uses it in Drink.

Charles Stelph, formerly a bartender, of Los Angeles, Cal., who was charged with stealing a diamond belonging to George Gordon, claims he mistook the gem for a piece of ice and used it in making a high ball. That was his defense when he was arraigned here after being brought back from El Paso, Texas.

Stelph declared he must have dropped the diamond in a drink and some one swallowed it, as he did not know

what had become of the stone, which was given him by Gordon to be sold.

"Stelph talked so big about buying seventy-five-dollar suits of clothes, that I thought he owned the café, and let him have the diamond to sell for me," Gordon explained to the court. "He never came back with it."

Will Study Mounds in Iowa.

To explore the ancient mounds and Indian burial places in Scott County, Iowa, and vicinity, a society of Iowa scientists has been formed. It will coöperate with the Davenport Academy of Sciences, which has the largest collection of mound builders' relics in the Mississippi Valley. The new society expects to make important discoveries showing the stage of civilization which had been reached by the prehistoric inhabitants of that region of the country. Only a few of the Scott County mounds have been opened.

Must Wed Within Year to Save \$1,000 He Bet.

Unless he finds a wife within the next year, H. C. Moore, of Eldorado, Okla., must stand the expenses of a trip to the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco to be taken by his two married brothers.

An agreement was made by the three brothers eighteen months ago that the married members of the family should attend the exposition at the expense of the single members, and the local boy is the only one of the three yet unmarried. The expenses of the trip are estimated at \$1,000.

Doctor J. T. Moore, of Allgood, Tenn., was married several months ago, and J. M. Moore, of Altus, a second brother, followed suit recently.

The local man is worried about the predicament he is in. He is said to be fairly wealthy, and is understood to be willing for some fair maid to lead him to the altar. According to the agreement, if all three of the brothers are married by next year, each must pay his own expenses to the exposition.

Boy of Eleven is Best Speller.

William Boselager, eleven, of East St. Louis, completed a spelling match, here, in which he spelled 1,400 words without a miss. The bee was limited to thirty-five boys and girls of the sixth grade of the various schools, and lasted eleven hours.

Boy Pitcher Can't Jump Team.

"Babe" Ruth, the eighteen-year-old pitching sensation of the Baltimore International League team, cannot become a Federal Leaguer, no matter how large a fortune is offered him to jump. Jack Dunn, manager of the Baltimore club, found the boy in an industrial school and has been appointed his guardian. Ruth can sign no contracts without his guardian's consent.

POST CARDS FROM EVERYWHERE

Membership Exchange and copy Aurora Post Card Magazine 10c. Coin. 3 Months 25c. E. L. GAMBLE, Publisher, EAST LIVERPOOL, O.



OLD COINS WANTED

\$4.25 each paid for U. S. Eagle Cents dated 1856. We pay a CASH premium on hundreds of old coins. Send 10 cents at once for New Illustrated Coin Value Book. It may mean YOUR fortune. CLARK & CO., Coin Dealers, Box 67, LeRoy, N. Y.